

THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF
FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

The Author Follows His Heart Back to Texas **By H.G. BISSINGER**

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

EXCLUSIVE

Pete Carroll

*Won't Be
Haunted by His*
**Super Bowl
Decision**

40

By
**GREG
BISHOP**

AUGUST 3, 2015
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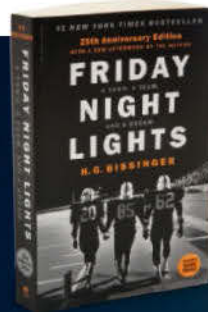
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2015 | VOLUME 123 | NO. 4



Features

BASEBALL

34

Zack Greinke

By honing his pitches, L.A.'s King of Nothingness has gotten even better
By Tom Verducci

PRO FOOTBALL

40

Pete Carroll

The coach is moving on after a gutsy call cost his Seahawks a Super Bowl ring
By Greg Bishop

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

48

Shaka Smart

SI got an exclusive look at how the new Texas coach is rebranding the Longhorns
By Brian Hamilton

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

54

Friday Night Lights

Revisiting the six boys, now men, who were the heart of the most celebrated sports book of the last 25 years
By H.G. Bissinger

Departments

4 **SI Digital**

6 **Leading Off**

12 **Inbox**

14 **Scorecard**

28 **Faces in The Crowd**

30 **Just My Type**
Dan Patrick:
Kelly Slater on being shark bait

68 **Point After**
Steve Rushin:
A summer bucket list

LEADING LIGHTS

Three of the book's heroes, (from left) Ivory Christian, Brian Chavez and Mike Winchell, posed at Odessa's Ratliff Stadium.

On the cover:

Rod Mar (Carroll); John Iacono for Sports Illustrated (background)

Photograph by

Robert Clark
For Sports Illustrated
Erick W. Rasco for Sports Illustrated (book)

Sports Illustrated



■ ROB GRONKOWSKI

The Patriots' All-Pro tight end sat down with Maggie Gray to discuss earning Tom Brady's trust and how he'll adjust if Brady's Deflategate suspension is upheld.

MAGGIE GRAY: *How long did it take you to earn the respect and trust of Tom Brady?*

ROB GRONKOWSKI: It took a while. You can't just walk in and automatically gain respect out there on the field as a rookie. You've got to put the work in, practice a lot, stay after practice and do extra routes.

MG: *You have said that Tom was really hard on you.*

RG: Yes, I felt like he was, but it was with good intentions, and he saw the potential in me. But it was good for me. It made me want to work harder and get the job done. About halfway through my rookie year [2010], we started making the connection,

"You can't just walk in and automatically gain respect as a rookie."

—Rob Gronkowski

getting the timing going and trusting each other with the pass routes. So when everything started clicking and everything started rolling between us, he got a little nicer. We're good pals and friends now.

MG: *You talk so much about building chemistry with Tom. If he has to miss any games this season, how will that affect you?*

RG: I still got to do my job. I still got to do what I got to do and prepare for the games. I'll just have to get used to a new quarterback for a little bit. We'll have our practice time. We practice with everyone on the team, not just Tom, so we're somewhat used to everyone and how they play. So I just got to be ready and focus on doing what I got to do. □

*For more of Gronkowski's interview, plus the SI Now archive, go to **SI.com/sinow***

TUNE IN



▶ **EPISODE: JULY 21**

Is Florida State coach **Jimbo Fisher** doing enough to change the culture at FSU?



▶ **EPISODE: JULY 22**

Does the end of the criminal case against **Barry Bonds** give him a better shot at the Hall of Fame?



▶ **EPISODE: JULY 23**

When will a woman such as Spurs assistant coach **Becky Hammon** get an NBA head-coaching job?



▶ **EPISODE: JULY 24**

Is Swedish striker **Zlatan Ibrahimovic** leaving Paris Saint-Germain for MLS?

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a person's face, focusing on the eye and sunglasses. The person has light skin and dark hair. They are wearing dark-framed sunglasses with a gold-colored bridge and temples. The lenses are dark and reflective, showing a greenish tint. The person's eye is visible through the lens, looking slightly to the side. The lighting is bright, creating strong shadows on the face.

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**Leading
Off**


King Cole

■ Like 26 batters before him and two after, the Cubs' Addison Russell failed to get a hit last Saturday off Phillies starter Phillies starter Cole Hamels. The no-hitter was the first at Wrigley Field since Sept. 7, 1972, when Chicago's Milt Pappas stymied the Padres. Hamels, 31, walked two, fanned 13 and even out-hit the Cubbies with a double in the eighth of a 5-0 win. Afterward, he put his arm around centerfielder Odubel Herrera (inset), who had preserved the no-no with two running catches at the warning track.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
STEPHEN GREEN







+

23

**Leading
Off**

Yellow Streak

■ On Sunday, in Paris on the Champs-Élysées, Chris Froome (in yellow) of Team Sky became the first Briton to win the Tour de France twice; he won in 2013. He's also the first African to prevail at the storied race. A native of Kenya, Froome, 30, competes for Britain because his father, Clive, moved to Kenya from England and started a safari business. Froome became the first rider since Belgium's Eddy Merckx in 1970 to win both the mountain classification and the race.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
DAVID STOCKMAN
BELGA/ZUMAPRESS.COM





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33

**Leading
Off**

On Their Heels

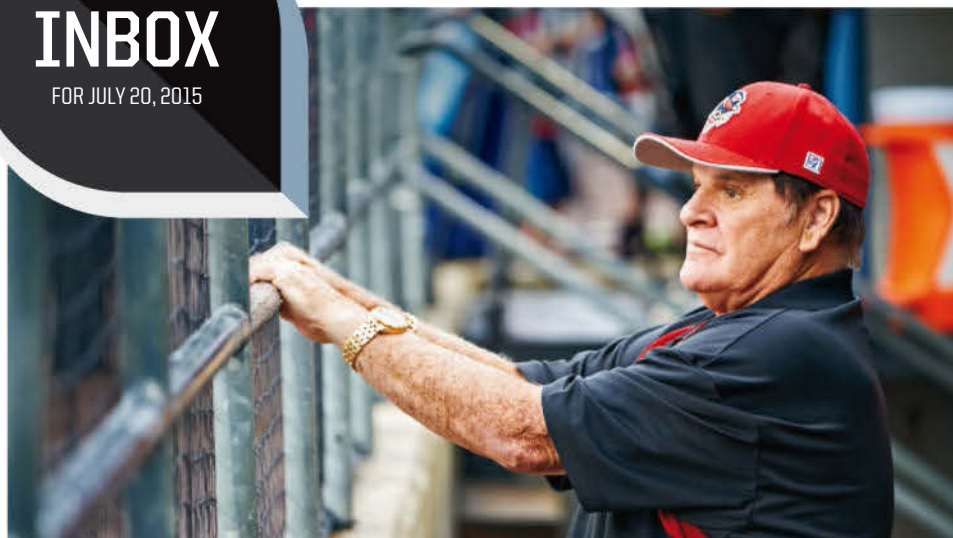
■ Forward Clint Dempsey (8), colliding with center back Wes Morgan of Jamaica, wasn't the only member of the U.S. soccer team in distress during a 2-1 loss in the CONCACAF Gold Cup semifinal on July 22 in Atlanta. It was the first time in 12 years that the U.S. was knocked out before the final of the tournament. Jamaica, which had beaten the U.S. once in their last 22 matches, was ranked 76th in the world, the U.S. 34th. In the final, Jamaica fell 3-1 to Mexico, which will face the U.S. on Oct. 9 in Pasadena for a berth in the 2017 Confederations Cup in Russia.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
DAVID GOLDMAN

AP

INBOX

FOR JULY 20, 2015



I've never been so moved by Tom Verducci's writing as I was by his article on **Pete Rose**. I felt like I was right there in the Bentley with them. I hope we see Charlie Hustle in the Hall of Fame while he is still around to enjoy it.

Jeff Meyerhofer, Minneapolis

What part of "lifetime ban" is open for interpretation? We are a nation of second chances . . . blah, blah, blah. It's been nothing but lie after lie, contradiction after contradiction. That is the legacy of Pete Rose. Reinstating him would be an insult to the memory of Bart Giamatti and to baseball.

Bill Perry, Monmouth Junction., N.J.

I am 12 years old and I play goalkeeper for a recreational soccer team. I really love watching the USWNT. I look up to these players, and I would like to be on the team one day. I'm collecting all 25 covers. Here's a picture of the first 17.

Bailey Cook, Dallas, Ga.



The **LEADING OFF** photo of Carli Lloyd's second goal in the U.S.'s 5-2 win over Japan must be what Jim McKay was visualizing when he said, "The thrill of victory and the agony of defeat."

Jim Lavold, Wauwatosa, Wis.



COVER

The **U.S. Women's National Team** was an exceptional choice for your cover. But while Megan Rapinoe has world-class soccer feet, I found myself focusing more on her clodhopper choice of footwear.

Patrick Jones
Cary, N.C.



PAGE
21

SCORECARD

Tim Layden's piece on **Ken Stabler** was a fine tribute to a true NFL legend. Not getting inducted into the Hall of Fame while he was alive is sad, but it will not diminish Stabler's stature among football fans.

Glenn Hang
Peoria, Ariz.



PAGE
72

POINT AFTER

Michael Rosenberg's article on pro women's soccer doesn't point out the power of the media. The NWSL won't become popular enough to make it financially feasible unless the media covers it adequately.

Olli Silander
Virginia Beach

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Edited by JIM GORANT + TED KEITH

SCORECARD

Chasing El Chapo

The man charged with catching an escaped Mexican drug lord—again—is a Notre Dame diehard who approaches criminal investigations as the hoops coach he is

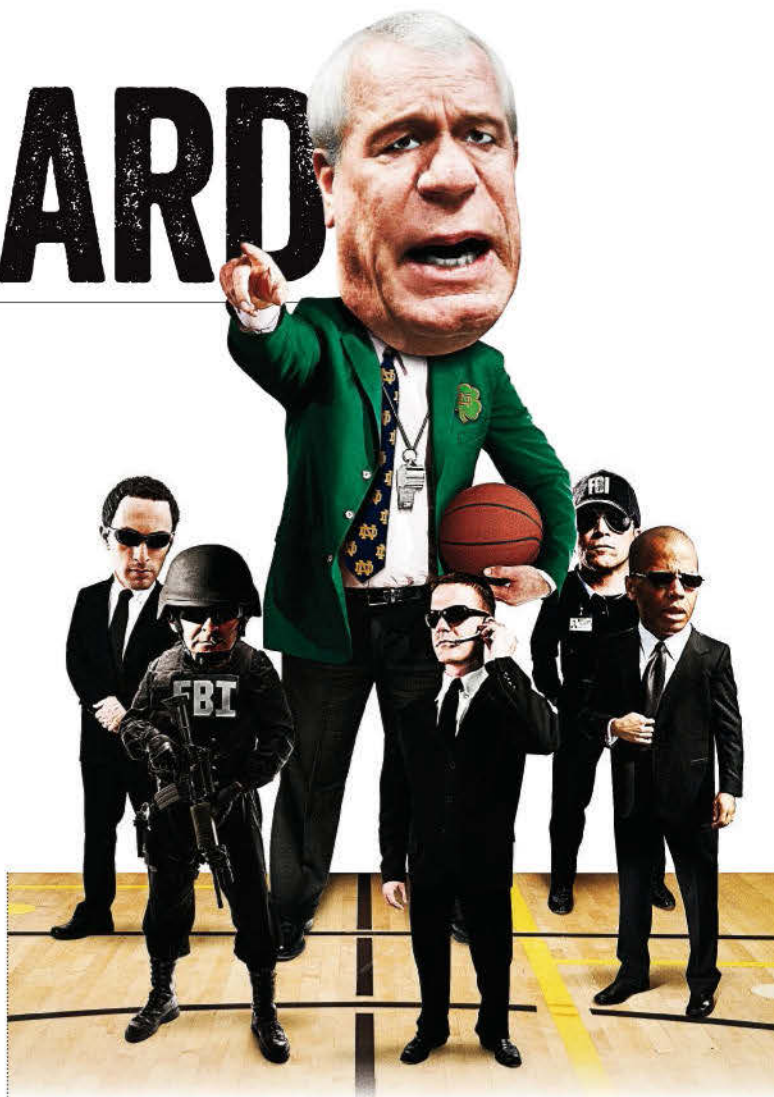
BY KEN RODRIGUEZ

IF JACK RILEY were not pursuing the world's most notorious drug lord, he'd be coaching in a youth basketball league, repairing psyches and developing skills of players cut from high school teams. For much of the past 25 years Riley has been trying to turn young ballers into the player he never became: a 6-foot guard whose walk-on attempt at Bradley University four decades ago ended with an unappealing offer from the coach: Do you want to be a team manager? He didn't.

While recent events have temporarily derailed

Riley's basketball pursuits, he is still coaching. As second in command of the Drug Enforcement Agency, Riley, 57, has assembled an international team of agents and operatives, chasing Joaquín (El Chapo) Guzmán, leader of the Western Hemisphere's largest drug-trafficking organization, the Sinaloa cartel.

Guzmán's sensational escape from a maximum-security prison in Mexico on July 11 made him the No. 1 fugitive in the Americas and was cause for Riley to recall the core principle he used to help capture El Chapo in 2014: teamwork.



While running the DEA's Field Division in Chicago, Riley recognized that rival law enforcement agencies sometimes stumbled over each other in pursuit of the same target. To unify operations, Riley formed a single strike force. Under the DEA umbrella, agents from more than a dozen organizations began to share intelligence and collaborate on strategy.

Among them: the FBI, the Secret Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the IRS criminal investigation division, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the U.S. Marshals Service and the Chicago police. "I call it the end-of-the-season all-star team," Riley says. The all-stars took their

ILLUSTRATION BY DARRROW

lead from Riley, who grew up in Chicago and is a lifelong Notre Dame fan. He listened to voices and views, considered options, then called “plays,” as Riley puts it, for his team. Since the strike force launched four years ago, agents have made dozens of arrests. High-ranking associates of Guzmán have pleaded guilty in court.

One foundation of Riley’s team is intelligence gathering. A wiretap once revealed that Guzmán, known for orchestrating mutilations and beheadings, had placed a bounty on Riley’s head. Strike-force intelligence also played a role in Mexico’s apprehension of Guzmán last year. Though Riley didn’t make the capture himself, he still experienced a certain satisfaction. “I’m the starting quarterback for the Fighting Irish,” he told the *Chicago Reader*, “we’re playing in the National Championship game, and I just threw a touchdown in the fourth quarter and we won.”

Riley’s crusade against El Chapo affects young athletes across the U.S. As SI reported in June, sports injuries are leading to an addiction to opioid-based painkillers. Once painkiller prescriptions expire, many athletes turn to a cheaper, more powerful alternative—heroin, at just \$5 a bag. Much of that

heroin comes through El Chapo’s cartel, which targets prescription-drug addicts. “In the athletic arena,” Riley told SI, “if anything can be likened to a weapon of mass destruction, it’s heroin.”

Riley understands the connection between sports injuries and drug abuse better than most. One player he coached in a Catholic youth league got hurt and became addicted to painkillers. A second player suffered a neck injury and years later overdosed on heroin. Memories of heartbreak, tears and funerals fuel Riley’s obsession with El Chapo. “The hunt is back on,” he says.

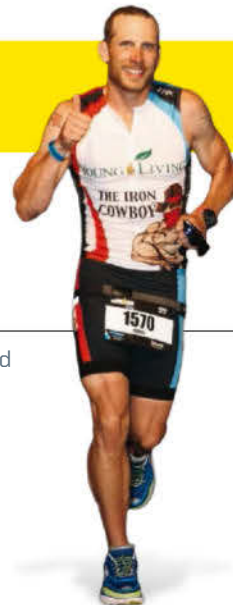
A determined optimist, Riley speaks of *when*, not *if*, Guzmán will be recaptured. From his 12th-floor office in Washington, D.C., Riley has a view of the city, the Pentagon and his life after El Chapo. When the DEA’s most wanted man in the world is killed or captured, Riley says he will retire to a life of gyms and bouncing balls. “What I really like doing,” Riley says, “is taking a kid who got cut [in middle school] and helping him make his high school team.”

That takes training, confidence-building, countless hours of personal coaching. Riley knows every detail by heart. He created the template at the DEA. □

GO FIGURE

50

Ironman triathlons completed in 50 days across all 50 states by **James Lawrence**, who capped his achievement last Saturday in his home state of Florida. The Ironman Cowboy swam approximately 120 miles in total, ran 1,310 miles and biked 5,600 miles.



3 Consecutive NASCAR Sprint series wins for **Kyle Busch**, the first driver since Jimmie Johnson in 2007 to take three straight. Busch won the Quaker State 400 on July 11, the 5-hour Energy 301 on July 19 and the Brickyard 400 on Sunday.

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U.S. cities with active bids for the 2024 Olympics after Boston pulled out on Monday. The USOC is hoping for a new bid by the Sept. 15 deadline.

735

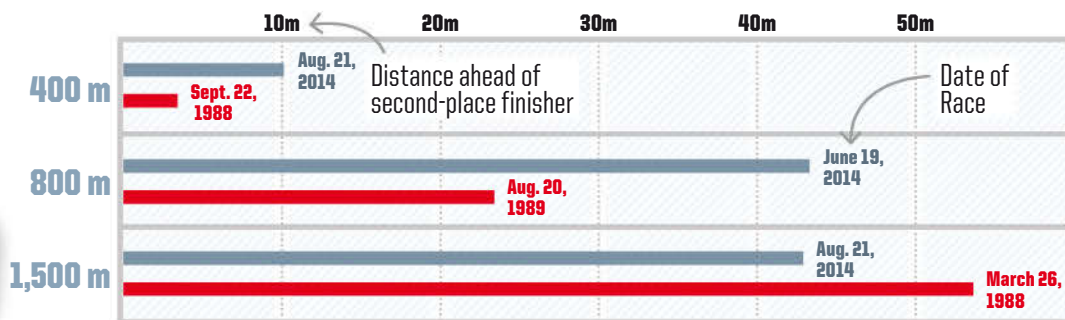
Combined wins for John Smoltz (213), Randy Johnson (303) and Pedro Martinez (219), who were inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame on Sunday. That’s the most wins by any class of Cooperstown pitchers elected by the BBWAA since the inaugural group of 1936 had 790.





AT THE 2015 FINA World Championships that begin this week in Kazan, Russia, freestyler Katie Ledecky won't be racing the field so much as chasing after the world records she has set and reset over the last three years. Such is the life of today's most dominant swimmer, who graduated from Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Bethesda, Md., in June. In the 400-, 800- and 1,500-meter free, the three events Ledecky owns, the 18-year-old is a lock to swim away with gold—and the races probably won't be close. Compare the margin of victory in her world-record-setting wins with those of Janet Evans, the last American to dominate the same events.

—Sarah Kwak



MLB

Feds Whiff

Barry Bonds walks

LAST WEEK THE federal government announced it would not challenge a decision by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to reverse the lone charge—obstruction of justice—for which Barry Bonds was convicted in the long-running BALCO scandal. The box score for prosecuting ballplayers

suspected of using steroids is now complete: 10 criminal charges were brought, and zero resulted in a lasting conviction. It doesn't take a sabermetrician to see that spending tens of millions of tax dollars prosecuting Bonds and Roger Clemens for their alleged crimes during baseball's Steroid Era was an inefficient use of time and resources.

Why did prosecutors strike out against two ballplayers whom many firmly believe used PEDs? Remember, Bonds



and Clemens were not prosecuted for drug use. The cases were instead built on a theory that they knowingly lied under

oath about their use. This distinction proved crucial. Bonds's personal trainer, Greg Anderson, went to jail in 2006 to avoid testifying against him, leaving the government without its best witness. Brian McNamee, Clemens's former trainer and chief accuser, had his own believability issues stemming from his inconsistent testimony.

The feds thus found out what opposing teams knew for over 20 years: It's not easy to beat Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens.

—Michael McCann

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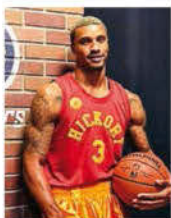
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Hoosiers Heroes

NEXT SEASON THE Indiana Pacers will honor the 30th anniversary of *Hoosiers* by wearing the uniforms made famous by fictional Hickory High. SI consulted with Angelo Pizzo, the film's writer, to see which current NBA players would be the best fits for the Huskers.



JIMMY CHITWOOD:
GORDON HAYWARD

Run the picket fence all day long for the baby-faced Hoosier State hero.

OLLIE MCCLELLAN:
MATTHEW DELLAVEDOVA

Doesn't shoot free throws granny style, but he's a floor-burn-lovin' reserve.

RADE BUTCHER:
J.R. SMITH

Four passes before shooting? Not when a gunner like Smith is playing, no matter what his coach says.

STRAP PURL:
AMAR'E STOUDEMIRE

God will want Stoudemire on the floor where he can best throw around his bulk.

MERLE WEBB:
JEREMY LIN

Point guard from Harvard represents all the guys from small schools who never got a chance.

BUDDY WALKER:
DEANDRE JORDAN

Quits team over a disagreement with his coach, returns and sticks to opponents like gum.

EVERETT FLATCH:
JOHN LUCAS

Father overcame demons, helps from afar; son a valuable glue guy, and hasn't thrown anyone into a trophy case.

WHIT BUTCHER:
CHRIS SMITH

Brother of the team's gunner ain't no gizzard, but two-game career makes it easy to forget he was ever around.



THEY SAID IT

"I do have a family, so it's going to be a little harder on me this year. But I'm going to push through it."

JOSH SMITH

Clippers forward, on making \$6.9 million in 2015-16 after earning more than \$10 million each of the last eight seasons.



Cole Hamels

The Phillies' ace tossed a no-hitter at Wrigley five days before the trade deadline. No one has been this desperate to get out of Philly since Apollo Creed.



The Mets

Their batting is so bad that fans started a GoFundMe site to raise money for a slugger. Maybe they could just pay to wrap David Wright in protective foam.



SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

The Bowie Baysox, an Orioles Double A affiliate, planned to host **Back Hair Appreciation Night** on July 30, including a contest to win a free waxing.

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TRAINING WITH

+

Greg Jennings

A receiver gets cross

GREG JENNINGS likens his training to a state-of-the-art electric car: efficient and effective but thoroughly outnumbered by more traditional options.

Without cords, plugs and power outlets, the Dolphins' wide receiver charges up his game with elements of CrossFit, a fitness company that has created and popularized a training philosophy that mixes components of plyometrics, gymnastics and powerlifting in intense bursts of multiple exercises. "I got away from a lot of heavy weights, but I didn't lose power," says Jennings. "With CrossFit training, I got stronger with less stress on my joints."

Jennings, who played for the Vikings last year, was introduced to CrossFit by his trainer, Damian Harris, at the Studio Path in Kalamazoo, Mich., and he was immediately intrigued by the high ratio of work time to recovery time. "Your heart rate stays elevated and you work under pressure while being mentally and physically fatigued," says Jennings.

His high-intensity sessions include a combination of CrossFit fundamentals—burpees, kettlebell swings, box jumps, rope swings and more—repeated over a fixed time. Harris is also mindful of avoiding any exercises for Jennings, such as the clean and jerk, that could aggravate his prior injuries.



"When everyone is tired, Greg should be gaining momentum and at his peak performance at the end of a game," says Harris. He also specifically strengthened Jennings's weaker areas, such as his hamstrings, which are susceptible to wearing out late in the season. "We decided he needed to be lighter, faster and more explosive," Harris says.

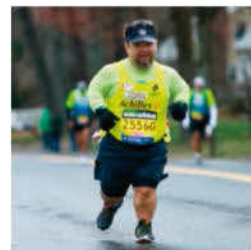
The rapid-fire circuits force Jennings to control his breathing and focus on a task, be it a clap push-up or a sideline catch. "Everyone feels the weight of the game and gets fatigued," says Jennings, "but it's all about how you've dealt with it in the past and what you've done to help yourself overcome those mental barriers." —*Jamie Lisanti*

EDGE

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Celebrating
Everyday
Athletes

THIS WEEK'S ATHLETE

John Young

@dwarfparatri

"I competed in my first triathlon in 2009 at 43 and have since completed more than 30 events. Next year, for my 50th, I hope to complete an Ironman, making me the first person with dwarfism to do so."

Training for something? New workout routine? Share your photo and what you're doing with us on Twitter/Instagram with **#trainingwithSI**, and you could be featured in an upcoming issue.

Circuit Breaker

Try one of Jennings's circuits: Do 10 reps each of push-up side planks (right), burpee pull-ups, box jumps, squat thrusters and clap push-ups (see SI.com/trainingwith) for as many rounds as possible over 20 minutes. Greg's record is 18 sets—can you beat it?

For more athlete training profiles and tips, go to SI.com/trainingwith



1

Perform a regular push-up with your hands on dumbbells.



2

Holding the position, row a dumbbell up to the side of your chest.



3

Shift your weight and twist, lifting the same arm until you're in a side plank.

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Candy Man

Best known as the answer to a Super Bowl trivia question, Mike Lodish is tackling the food industry with his mom's peanut brittle

BY
**ALEXANDRA
FENWICK**



A SERIES
FROM THE
EDITORS OF
FORTUNE
AND
Sports Illustrated

IN A ROOM about half the size of a football field housed inside a sprawling manufacturing facility in an industrial park in Warren, Mich., Mike Lodish cuts a curious figure while walking the production line. With his white lab coat and a hairnet tucked over his bald head, the 6' 3", 275-pound Lodish towers over the workers who

are cooking, cooling and packing delicate chunks of his signature product.

Leaning over a copper kettle of bubbling, honey-colored syrup, Lodish takes in the caramelized sugar smell—a campfire marshmallow roast gone wonderfully awry. The vat of liquid candy will yield 40 pounds of Lodish's Champion Brittle, a family-

recipe confection that Lodish hopes to elevate from a regional business to a national brand. An NFL defensive lineman for 11 years who retired after the 2000 season, Lodish has graduated from the crunch of colliding with an opponent's shoulder pads to the crunch of biting into a chunk of peanut brittle.

At Pat's Gourmet LLC, named after Lodish's mother, Lodish calls himself the COOE: Chief Operating Officer of Everything. He oversees the books with his accountant, places orders and serves as director of sales. "Launching a small business is much tougher" than playing football, the 47-year-old Lodish says. "I've gotten my M.B.A. essentially by doing this."

Lodish is best known as the answer to a trivia question: Who was the first man to play in six Super Bowls? (This year Patriots quarterback Tom Brady became the second.) Lodish won two of those games with the Broncos, in the 1997 and '98 seasons, after four straight losses with the Bills in the early '90s. If his name doesn't ring a bell, that's not surprising: Lodish, an All-Pac-10 defensive tackle at UCLA, was selected in the 10th round of the 1990 draft and started just 31 times in 166 NFL games.

"I was a drone in the beehive," he says. After retiring and completing his college degree in history—with a minor in business administration—Lodish went home to Birmingham, Mich., and tried a few different careers, including as an NFL contract adviser and as a sales rep for a communications company. He got the inspiration for producing peanut brittle in '11, when he saw a commercial for Legal Zoom, a company that helps small businesses with legal paperwork; the ad featured Janet Long, a fellow UCLA alum who brought her mother's candy toffee recipe to market.

Succeeding in the food business requires offering a unique concoction, and Lodish was convinced he had that in his mother's brittle, which came

Sub Mission

Lodish rarely started, but he scored two TDs as a Bill and won two rings as a Bronco.

from a family recipe going back several generations. (Pat, 74, estimates she's been making it for nearly half a century.) The brittle was also a tribute to Pat, a former executive director of a senior housing center in Birmingham, whom Lodish credits with instilling his work ethic. "I was a champion in



"Launching a small business is much tougher" than playing football, says Lodish, an NFL noseguard for 11 years. "I've gotten my M.B.A. essentially by doing this."

SI.COM

To watch a video about Mike Lodish and to see the entire Pro-Files video series, go to SI.com/pro-files

football," he says. "My mom is my champion in life."

Pat's nickname, tellingly, is General Patton. "I like to be accountable for my actions," she says, "and I try to instill that in my children." That sometimes meant curbing her son's entrepreneurial instincts. Mike's first love was hockey, and his father, Mike, an oncological surgeon, would

give him rolls of medical tape to use for his ankles and shin guards. At age 10 or 11, Lodish built a side business selling tape to teammates who'd forgotten theirs; he was busted after a well-meaning hockey mom approached Pat and thanked her. "I made him give back their money, every penny of it," Pat says.

"That was probably the start of my entrepreneurial endeavors," Lodish says with a grin. These days, his endeavors win Pat's approval: The brittle, available in three flavors, is stocked regionally in about 30 metro Detroit specialty food stores, including Whole Foods.

"It's thrilling to go into the supermarket and see it on the shelf," says Pat.

GETTING IT THERE wasn't easy. Lodish launched the company in September 2011, investing \$16,000 of his own money; it took 14 months to get the product to market. He started by doing research, trying 100 other recipes before deciding that none could improve on his mother's. Pat's product is

lighter than typical brittle, with air bubbles that give it a satisfying crunch. That, Lodish says, is a function of the precise length

of time and the temperature at which it is cooked, both of which are top secret. On the factory floor, guests (including reporters) are required to turn away at crucial points in the brittle's production.

But Lodish also realized his product was highly marketable as a locally made, relatively health-conscious treat. The recipe is vegan—no butter or dairy

Sports Illustrated

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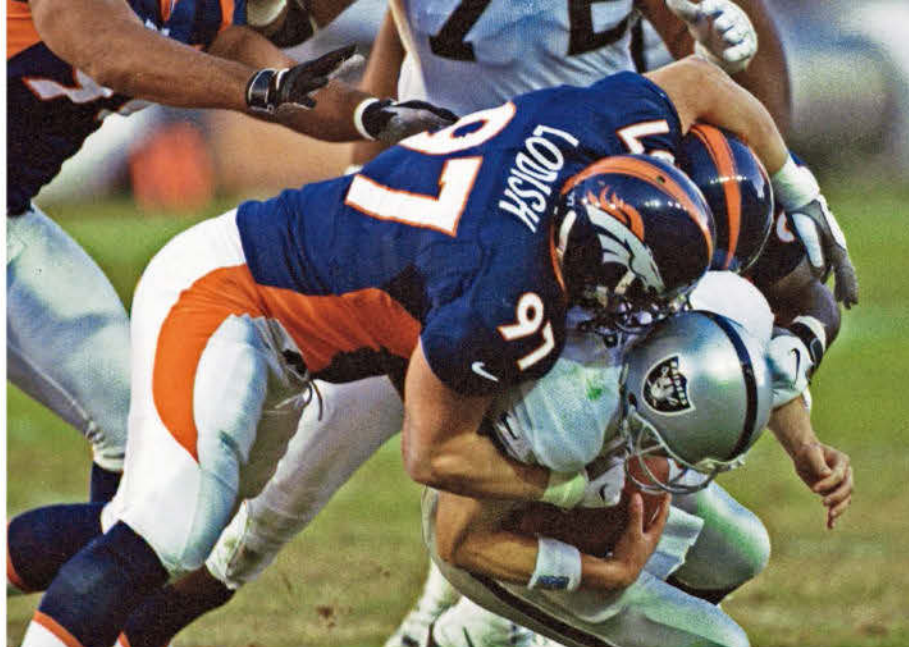
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included—and gluten-free. And Lodish's football fame gave the product a built-in local appeal.

Financial success hasn't arrived yet. While he hasn't had to invest more of his own money, Lodish says whatever modest gains he does make go immediately back into the company. Still, the volume has almost doubled since the brittle's debut in December 2012, with the company selling 700 to 1,000 pounds most weeks and as many as 2,500 pounds per week during peak demand in the fall. (Packages retail for \$7 per half pound.) For now, he's the sole full-time employee; he relies on contract workers from JLM Manufacturing, which owns the facility where his brittle is made. Lodish, who has an 11-year-old son, doesn't pay himself a salary; he earned roughly \$5 million in his NFL career and currently has a side job as an account manager at Nexlink Communications.

In the meantime he's learned a lot of lessons—especially about salesmanship. "He's very witty, very quick on his feet," says Spiro Liras, who runs the Warren manufacturing facility. "He's out there beating on people's doors and getting it on the shelves. He just doesn't give up, and that's what it takes."

Persistence is a trait that Lodish—a self-described "bulldog"—has never lacked. "It's just churning and burning and grinding the phone and making appointments," he says. But selling is also his favorite part: "If the first person says no, they don't want the brittle, I say, 'O.K., no problem, I'll be back.' And then I come back and say, 'Hey, I'm selling six cases a week out of this other store—you want to give this a shot?' They need to be shown that the volume is there."



Strong-arm Tactics

Despite being undersized, Lodish was able to muscle his way onto the field at both UCLA (bottom) and in Denver.

That tenacity isn't so different from what it took to succeed on the gridiron. As a junior Lodish won the Bruin Brawn title as UCLA's weightlifter of the year, setting team records in the squat and in the combined bench, squat and clean. Still, he slipped

to 265th in the draft because he was considered too small to play noseguard in the NFL.

Lodish got his first chance to prove himself as a rookie at Bills training camp, when a second-year offensive lineman was administering cheap shots during one-on-one drills. A defensive assistant coach noticed and announced to his players, "If any of you line up on this guy and you allow this to happen to you, you will not make my football team," Lodish recalls. Sure enough, he faced the guy the next day.

Lodish beat him on the first rep and in return got a shove in the back after the whistle. "I looked at him and told him, 'Don't do that again,'" Lodish

says. Then he beat him on the second rep. "He tried to punk me again, and so I turned around, grabbed his mask, jerked it down, pulled it up and drilled him across his jaw and knocked him right down to his knees," Lodish says. "All of a sudden my coach said to himself, 'I got a rookie that wants to make my football team.' And from there on I had an opportunity to perform."

For five seasons in Buffalo, Lodish was a defensive tackle on a roster that included Hall of Famers Jim Kelly, Bruce Smith and Thurman Thomas. He moved on to Denver for the 1995 season, playing all but three games there over the next six seasons, including the victories in Super Bowls XXXII and XXXIII.

But just as valuable as those wins to Lodish are the championship defeats he suffered with the Bills, which let him know that nothing would come easy. "You need the disappointment in order to teach you and to test your resolve," Lodish says. "Losing four Super Bowls taught me to say, 'You know what? Don't ever give up, keep going, there's always another day tomorrow.'"

□



UPDATE

Breaking Glass Backboards

■ BECKY HAMMON

made history last summer when San Antonio hired her as the first female full-time assistant coach in the history of major men's American sports. Last week she continued her pioneering ascent, leading the Spurs' Las Vegas Summer League squad to the 2015 title. It's not the first time that Hammon, 38, has overcome the odds. Despite going undrafted, she scrapped to build a 16-season WNBA career, for New York and San Antonio, earning six All-Star nods along the way, before playing internationally. Spurs head coach Gregg Popovich said in a recent radio interview that Hammon's hiring was no gimmick. "She's a coach, and she's good at it," he said. "I think it's a step in the right direction." —A.F.



Jared Harper | *Mableton, Ga.* | *Basketball*

Jared, a 5' 11" senior point guard at Pebblebrook High, had 34 points, eight assists and four rebounds to lead the Georgia Stars to a 104-77 win over the St. Louis Eagles in the Nike EYBL Peach Jam final in North Augusta, S.C. He averaged 23.3 points over three games in the tournament and was named co-MVP. Jared has committed to Auburn.



Megan Khang | *Rockland, Mass.* | *Golf*

Megan, a recent Rockland High graduate, made her record-tying seventh appearance at the U.S. girls' junior tournament, at Tulsa Country Club; she won the stroke-play title by firing an eight-under 132 and reached the round of 32 in match play. Two weeks earlier she was the low amateur at the U.S. Women's Open, carding a five-over 285.



Ricky Thomas | *San Diego* | *Baseball*

Thomas, a sophomore lefthander at Fresno State, struck out nine and allowed just one earned run on three hits in seven innings to lead the Yarmouth-Dennis Red Sox to a 4-1 win over the Harwich Mariners in the Cape Cod Baseball League. He is 6-0 with an 0.95 ERA this summer. As a freshman for the Bulldogs, Thomas went 4-3 with a 3.92 ERA.

FACES IN THE CROWD

Edited by ALEXANDRA FENWICK



Aerial Powers | *Detroit* | *Basketball*

Powers, a 6-foot junior forward at Michigan State, had 27 points and nine boards to lead the U.S. to an 82-63 win over Canada for the World University Games title in Gwangju, South Korea. She averaged a team-high 18.0 points for the tournament. Powers had 24 double doubles at MSU last season and was an All-Big Ten pick for the second straight year.



Homer Brown | *Birmingham* | *Table Tennis*

Brown, 66, played in a record 47th consecutive U.S. Open last month. The owner of the nation's first table tennis store, he reached the men's 65-and-over doubles final in Las Vegas with Richard McAfee, losing to Dell Sweeris and David Sakai. Brown won the Class A men's and mixed doubles titles in 1973 and '74.



Olivia Rohrbacher and Keegan Smith
Sandusky, Ohio; San Diego, Calif. | *Tennis*

Olivia, a junior at Perkins High, won the girls' New Balance High School Championship, in Cambridge, Mass., 6-4, 6-4 over Jenna Moustafa of Los Angeles. Keegan, a junior at Point Loma High, took the boys' title 6-1, 6-3 over Jaird Meyer of L.A.

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JUST MY TYPE

→ Interview by DAN PATRICK

DAN PATRICK: Did you think that it could have been you [fighting the shark] if you had defeated Fanning in the semifinal?

KELLY SLATER: It very well could have been. In our semifinal I needed one more good score [to win] but got a little impatient. If I had been just a little more patient, I probably would have been in the final. I would have probably been sitting close to where Mick was at the time. A bunch of friends and family said, "It was the first time we were glad we didn't see you make a final."

DP: Have you seen [sharks] when you've been surfing?

KS: I've seen tons of sharks. I'm from Florida, so I've seen hundreds of sharks over the years. I've seen a great white breach here at Jeffrey's Bay [in South Africa]. We see sharks all over the world. It's natural. It's like if a shark went on land, he'd see a human. Same thing.

DP: Was Fanning in shock?

KS: I think he was in shock for quite a while. It's one of those things where you have to play mind games with yourself to get over it. It's a realistic threat for what we do. A couple of months ago I had dinner with Derek Jeter.



KELLY SLATER

SHARK TALE

The 11-time surfing champ lost to Mick Fanning in the semifinals of the J-Bay Open of South Africa on July 19. Fanning was attacked by a shark in the final, ending the competition.

He said, "I'll never surf. I'm too scared of sharks." I said statistically there's nothing to be worried about. Hundreds of millions of people go in the water between shark attacks. He said, "I'm not hearing that. I don't care what you say."

DP: Do you understand why some people view surfing that way?

KS: There's always that realistic fear. Most people who have been around a lot of sharks think that shark didn't want to attack Mick. It was just curious. He didn't come up in attack mode with his head up and his tail down. His head was down and his tail was up and he bit through the leash. We have to try to take the emotion out of it and be realistic. The funny thing about this is that Mick Fanning, in my eyes, is one of the greatest athletes in the world. He's won three titles. And now everyone has just heard of him because he almost got bit by a shark.

DP: If you took me out on the water, could you teach me to surf?

KS: How good of a student are you?

DP: I'd be willing to try.

KS: I could probably get you up on the first wave if you get a big stable board that's closer to a boat. You can stand up in a boat, right?

DP: Can I wear floaties?

KS: If you want to, but you might be out there by yourself then.

DP: A Speedo?

KS: That's fine. I'd do it. □

GUEST SHOTS SAY WHAT?



British
Open
champ

Zach Johnson said he shared a private plane from Scotland with good friend Jordan Spieth after thwarting his bid for a Grand Slam. "We try to beat other's heads in," Johnson told me. "But when it comes down to it, we're going to be the first to applaud and share in the moment."... UAB football coach

Bill Clark considers the university's decision to shut down the



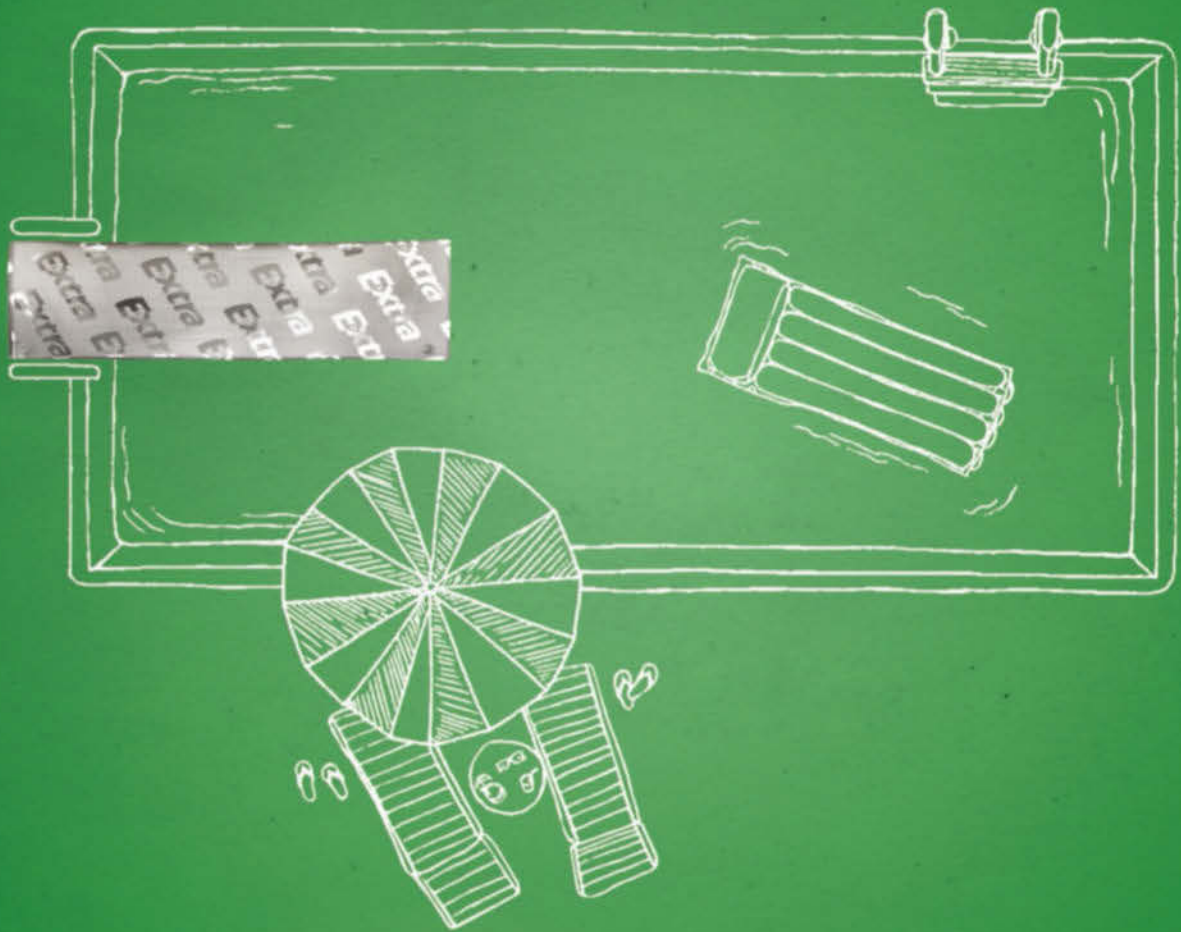
program seven months ago—only to decide to restart it in 2017—a selling point. "We have a national footprint now," Clark said. "All based on people seeing us fight to bring it back."... Actor

Tan Ziering described being with Mark Cuban on the



set of *Sharknado 3*: "The director was trying to motivate him and said, 'Act like you're really mad, like you just discovered someone took half a million dollars from you.' Mark said, 'I wouldn't even know it was missing.'"

DISHING IT OUT POOLSIDE WITH YOUR BFF



Sometimes, the little things
last the longest.

give



GET

Extra.

The Case for . . . An Earlier Trade Deadline

BY JOE SHEEHAN

LAST THURSDAY, MLB commissioner Rob Manfred said that he was considering pushing the nonwaiver trade deadline, which is currently July 31, back to Aug. 15 or even Aug. 31. The rationale is that having two wild-card berths in each league makes it harder for teams to know by the end of July whether they are buyers or sellers.

While this is a seductive idea, it's also a bad one. A better change would be to move the trade deadline up to June 15, where it was for more than 60 years until it was pushed to its current date in 1986. Some of the game's biggest deals happened that day, including future Hall of Famers Lou Brock going from the Cubs to the Cardinals in '64 and Tom Seaver from the Mets to the Reds in '77.

An earlier deadline would encourage the building of better teams. The modern game allows for an approach A's general manager Billy Beane has long articulated: Spend the first third of the season evaluating your team, the second third improving it and the final third watching the changed roster make

a run for the postseason.

The primary goal, though, should be not just reaching the postseason but winning the division title and avoiding the wild-card game. Doing that means trying to build a 95-win team rather than one that wins 88.

The second wild card hurts the trade market by slicing one "full" playoff spot into two, with a single game deciding who gets in. For teams that are playing only for a shot at the coin-flip round, such as the Tigers (11½ games out in the AL Central at week's end), there's a temptation to avoid selling in hopes of sneaking into the playoffs as the second wild card and going on a

run to a championship, as the Giants did last year. But there's also little motivation to be a buyer when reaching the postseason could mean a quick exit. Think of Beane's 2014 A's, who dealt away top prospects Addison Russell and Billy McKinney in July, only to spend about as much time in the postseason as you've spent reading this column.

That approach impedes the development of good teams over time and prevents the development of great ones. It's a crutch for GMs who would rather let the standings dictate their approach rather than their own beliefs.

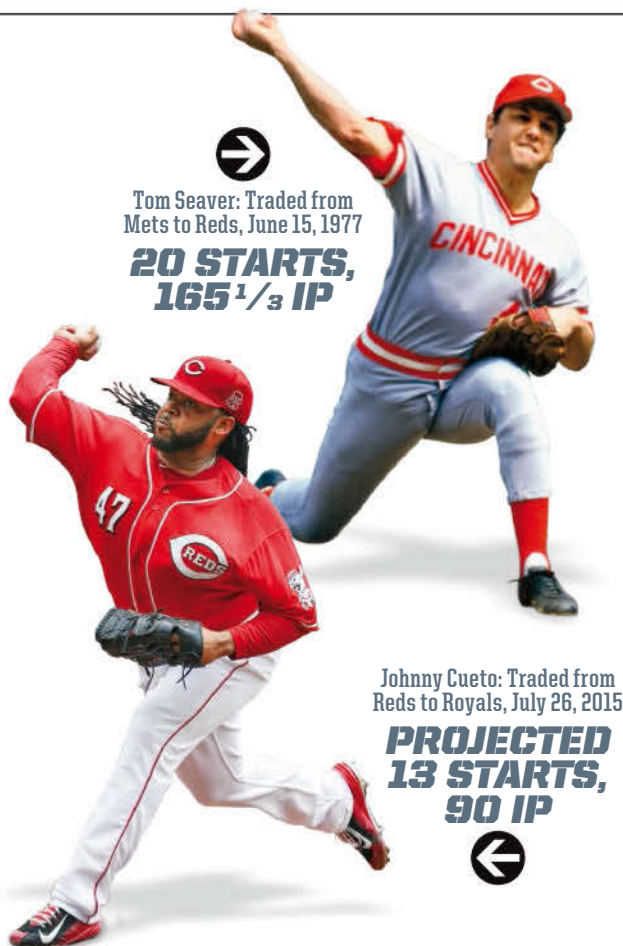
Moving the deadline up would also increase the value of the players who

are traded. On Sunday the Royals acquired Johnny Cueto from Cincinnati with 66 games left to play, meaning he'll make 13 or 14 starts for them, throw 90 to 95 innings and, sabermetrically speaking, be worth about two wins compared with the pitchers whose starts he'll take. The price Kansas City paid—three pitching prospects, including 2014 first-rounder Brandon Finnegan—reflects that limited value.

Had a June 15 deadline been in play, the Royals would be getting 20 to 22 starts, 140 to 150 innings and three to four wins of value. The Reds, too, would have been able to get more, such as Kansas City's top prospect, outfielder Raul Mondesi Jr. An earlier deadline would increase the value of veterans to their new teams and therefore increase the price paid for them, accelerating the rebuilding efforts of sellers, which would, in the long run, increase parity by spreading top talent around.

Nor would earlier trades necessarily depress the market. Teams may be less willing to concede they're out of the race in June, but they might be more willing to make the kind of trades that can have an immediate impact for both teams instead of just dealing in order to get rid of salary and impending free agents.

Manfred needs to make a decision that will be best for the game in the long term. Moving the deadline to June 15 will help do that. □



Tom Seaver: Traded from
Mets to Reds, June 15, 1977

**20 STARTS,
165 1/3 IP**

Johnny Cueto: Traded from
Reds to Royals, July 26, 2015

**PROJECTED
13 STARTS,
90 IP**



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BASEBALL



*It took a historic
scoreless streak for the world
to realize what big league
hitters know all too well:
A restless, curious mind and an
always-evolving arsenal of
pitches has made **Zack Greinke**
better than ever*

BY TOM VERDUCCI

Photograph by
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AP

f Nothing



DEADBALL STARE

Greinke's scoreless streak finally ended at $45\frac{2}{3}$ innings, good for fourth longest in the live ball era, while his ERA is an MLB-best 1.37.

ZACK GREINKE



P

Painstaking point by painstaking point, Georges Seurat took two years to paint his signature work, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*. Zack Greinke, the pointillist of pitching, took seven years to perfect the odd pitch he copied from a journeyman reliever.

With all five of his pitches Greinke has the best pinpoint control since Seurat. Dot by dot the Dodgers righthander crafted one of the three most impenetrable runs of pitching in the live ball era, joining fellow Los Angeles righthanders Don Drysdale (1968) and Orel Hershiser ('88) as the only pitchers in the modern era to make six straight starts without allowing a run.

While the brute force of velocity has become the preferred coin of the pitching realm, Greinke, 31, and six years removed from his Cy Young Award season, is a better pitcher than he's ever been—with the least speed on his fastball, down from an average of 94.4 mph in 2007 to 91.5 this year.

Greinke is a thinker, a dabbler, a tinkerer, an inventor and a scholar. He has an almost photographic recall of the more than 30,000 pitches he has thrown in the big leagues. He prefers to watch video of other pitchers rather than himself—but only pitchers who throw one of his five pitches better than he does, so that he can deconstruct their technique, as if sequencing a genome, to see what can be learned.

Impeccable as his craftsmanship is, more remarkable still is that it exists at all. Greinke did not choose pitching; pitching chose him.

"I didn't want to [pitch]," he says.

And where would Greinke rather be, if he were not joining only Drysdale and Hershiser in a century of pitching history?

"Probably catcher," he said. "That would be the best position."

The reluctant pitcher has earned \$113 million, and with an opt-out clause after this season, he can forgo the \$71 million the Dodgers owe him over the next three years for free agency and the opportunity to live in the financial neighborhood of Max Scherzer (seven years, \$210 million).

"There are no guarantees in baseball, especially with pitching," says Dodgers catcher A.J. Ellis, "but Zack is the surest bet there is. He can beat you with several pitches; he has already made adjustments without the same velocity; he's so athletic, his mechanics are perfect; and he's an awesome teammate. He reminds me of Mike Mussina with how he constantly finds new ways."

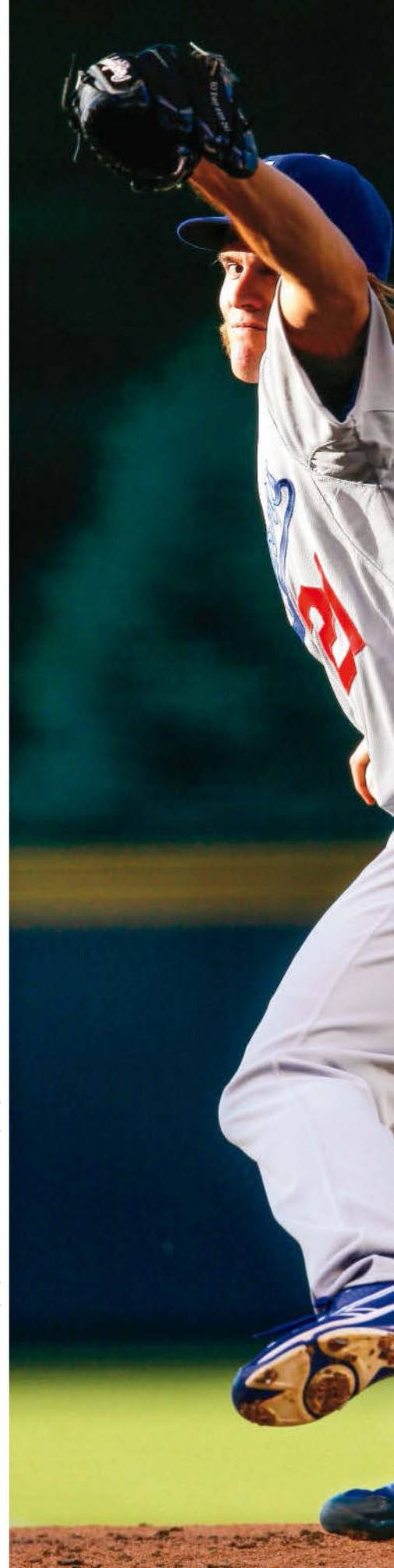
FIVE DAYS before Opening Day of the 2008 season, a gift arrived for Greinke, though he did not know it at the time. In a trade with Colorado, the Royals obtained Ramon Ramirez, a 26-year-old reliever who had already made stops with the Rangers, Hiroshima Carp, Yankees and



BLUE MAN GROUP

Greinke and Kershaw (above left) are the best one-two rotation punch in the game; combined they have given up three runs in eight July starts.

CHRIS WILLIAMS/CON SPORTSWIRE (LEFT); DOUG PENSINGER/GETTY IMAGES (RIGHT)





Rockies organizations, and from Kansas City would bounce among the Red Sox, Giants, Mets, Rays, Mariners, Orioles and the Mexican League. Batters would hit only .222 against Ramirez in '08, and Greinke, who had a 4.63 ERA to that point, marveled at how his new teammate did it: with a 92 mph fastball and an 88 mph changeup. Thrown so hard, the changeup defied the conventional wisdom that a pitcher should create the

“Zack is going to find a different way,” says catcher Ellis, “even if he has to invent something.”

widest separation possible between the speeds of those two pitches.

“That changeup was amazing,” Greinke says. “Me and [fellow Royals starter] Brian Bannister were like, Man, we need to try to throw that pitch.”

Greinke’s changeup at the time was his fourth-best pitch, behind his fastball, a wipeout slider that would become the backbone of his 2009 Cy Young season, and a decent curveball. (Greinke also throws an occasional sinker.) His changeup was a traditional off-speed pitch, floating in at 83 mph, about 11 mph slower than his four-seam fastball.

“I tried throwing slower for a long

time,” he says. “And it got usable, but it never got good. So I worked on another one, and it had a lot more potential.”

What bothered Greinke about the traditional changeup was that he could not get it to behave consistently. It wasn’t pinpoint. And when it hung over the plate, it became a home run pitch. So, inspired by Ramirez, he began throwing his changeup harder and experimenting with different grips. He finally cracked wthe equation this year: Hold it like a two-seam fastball but throw it off your middle and ring fingers—not your index and middle fingers—as hard as possible.

The result is a Frankenstein of a pitch: a two-seam changeup that looks like a sinker but dives like a split-fingered fastball. Greinke has thrown 427 changeups this year—a career-high average of 21 per start—while allowing just one extra base hit (a double) and a .196 batting average, per Brooks Baseball.

“That pitch is always in the back of my head,” says Braves first baseman Freddie Freeman, a .287 career hitter but a .133 hitter off Greinke in 15 at bats. “First of all, you don’t know when he’s going to throw it. It could be 3 and 1, and he’ll throw it. Even if I look for it, I can’t really hit it for some reason. And if I do look for it, I may get [a fastball at] 93, 94, so I’m in trouble either way. He is the toughest righthanded pitcher I’ve ever faced.”

The velocity gap between Greinke’s four-seam fastball, which has lost speed, and his changeup, which has gained speed, has narrowed every year for four consecutive years. It has shrunk to a 3.5 mph differential this season.

Asked to explain this apparent paradox, Greinke says, “Would you rather throw a pitch that’s 88–90 or a bad pitch that’s 80? I just try to make it move. We just kept working on grips and throwing it and hoping it sinks as much as possible. The plan was to get ground balls with it.

UNHIT KINGS *The all-time consecutive scoreless start leader board is a Dodgers-only zone.*



6

Don Drysdale
58 innings
1968



6

Orel Hershiser
59 innings
1988



6

Zack Greinke
45 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings
2015

My two-seamers weren't any good.

"With this one, even if the changeup was O.K., my command of it was above average. That made an average pitch a better than average pitch just for command reasons."

THE STREAK, which ended Sunday in New York after 45 $\frac{2}{3}$ scoreless innings, began June 18 at home against Texas (seven goose eggs) and continued on the road in Chicago against the Cubs (six) and in Miami (7 $\frac{2}{3}$), back home against the Mets (seven) and Phillies (eight), and then on the road in sweltering humidity in Washington (eight on a season-high 119 pitches, including 33 changeups). He faced only 14 batters in that stretch with a runner in scoring position and retired every one of them.

"I don't really think about it," Greinke said of the streak two days after the sixth shutout start in a row. "I don't want to work on something too much and then mess up when I'm doing good. There are ways to go about having a really good outing, but that could mess you up for two or three outings away if you use too much energy in one game. That [Washington] game was one I felt like I might have used too much effort."

(The streak, which ended via a hit batter, an outfield error and a fielder's choice hit by opposing pitcher Jacob deGrom, included two unofficial interruptions: a home run he allowed to Mike Trout in the All-Star Game and the birth of

his first child, Bode, whose arrival last week afforded him two extra days of recovery from the Washington start. "Typical Zack," Ellis said. "He's been doing his homework on fatherhood. He's been asking all of the guys with kids how it changes your life and what to expect.")

There is an alchemy to what Greinke does with a baseball. He is a master at inducing soft contact. Major league batters hit about .300 when they put the ball in play, but against Greinke's chocolate box of pitches they hit .232, the lowest mark among starters this year.

Most of his pitches float, sink or dart just off the plate down and away, mocking hitters with their carefully measured proximity the way a mechanical rabbit does a greyhound. Nothing demonstrates the wizardry of Greinke better than this: He has had more swinging strikes this season just on balls down and away (98) than in the zone (68). Knowing that his expertise in going down and away precedes him, Greinke recently began throwing his changeup down and *in* to righthanders.

Meanwhile, his slider has evolved. In 2009 hitters missed it once every four times they swung at it, the highest rate for any of his pitches in any year. "I felt like I could keep throwing it and they wouldn't see it any better," he says. "It was always like the first time they saw it. Probably the best pitch of all was my slider in 2009."

But over the next several years, little by little, Greinke began to lose one, two and then three miles an hour off the slider. "The better hitters were taking it," he

says. "I could throw it as good as I could throw it, and the hitters were taking it, and I'd get really frustrated. It was getting harder and harder to get hitters to chase."

The answer, again, was in the grip. In 2013, Greinke created another monster in his pitching lab: a slider thrown with a cutter grip. Though he holds the ball as if throwing a cutter (a pitch with mostly horizontal break), he rakes his fingers along the side of the ball to produce the spin of a slider (imparting downward tilt). Hitters have just one home run off the pitch this year.

The numbers are stupefying. Greinke has faced 277 righthanded batters and walked only four of them. Number 3 hitters—traditionally the best bat in the lineup—are now hitting .105 against him. His ERA (1.37) is lower than the lowest ERA since the mound was lowered in 1969 (1.53 by Dwight Gooden in '85) and within shouting distance of the modern record that caused the mound to be lowered (1.12 by Bob Gibson in '68).

"When Clayton [Kershaw] gets in trouble, he's going to stick to his guns," Ellis says about the Dodgers' lefthanded ace. "Zack is different. He's going to find a different way, even if he has to invent something."

GREINKE DID NOT become a full-time starting pitcher until his senior year at Apopka (Fla.) High, where his primary position was shortstop. Clemson wanted him, but so did the Royals, who selected him with the sixth pick of

ZACK GREINKE



the 2002 draft. Kansas City offered him \$2.5 million to pitch. Greinke took it, though he said at the time, “I was probably the only person, me and the college coaches, who thought going to college was the best idea.” When a reporter asked him if he was sad not to attend Clemson, the Royals’ freshly enriched first-round pick replied, “Yes.”

He reached the major leagues just two years out of high school but struggled with the routine of pitching and all the downtime and idle banter between



A LOT ON HIS PLATE

Greinke, who has the fourth-highest OBP among MLB pitchers with 300-plus plate appearances, still longs to be a position player.

starts. “I intentionally didn’t throw as hard as I could,” he says. “I didn’t really like pitching at the time. I wanted to be a position player.”

At age 22, after struggling to find purpose in spring training bullpen sessions, he walked out of Royals camp and went home. He was diagnosed with depression and a social anxiety disorder. He came back two months later after being prescribed Zoloft, which he still takes. He has since grown to love pitching—for the most part.

“Yeah, *when I’m pitching*,” he says. “It’s just that you’ve got a lot of time in between starts. It took me a long time to figure out what to do—for my mind. Now it doesn’t bother me, but it used to—coming to the field and not being able to do anything. All the trivial stuff. . . . There’s just a lot of time you have to fill. You’ve got to figure out what you like to do.”

“Zack is a very thoughtful, very deliberate person,” says Ellis. “We don’t bother him with idle talk. He always means what he says and is very particular with his words. He makes you think out of the box.”

For the past four years Greinke has broken down videotape of draft prospects for his team. He can tell you about the Dodgers’ seventh-round pick this year, out of Gonzaga. In spring training you might find him alone in the stands at Arizona State, scouting players for the fun of it. When he met with Dodgers GM Ned Colletti, president Stan Kasten and manager Don Mattingly during his free agency after the 2012 season, Greinke arrived alone. No lawyers, no agents, no buddies.

“If I’ve had a hundred of those meetings,” Colletti said, “this was maybe the third where a guy came alone. And he tells me, ‘I really like the kid [Corey] Seager you just drafted.’”

Says Ellis, “Zack likes to tell me, ‘Someday when I run a major league team, you’re going to be my general manager. I’ll be the assistant general manager, but I’ll run the team. You’ll be the GM so you have to deal with the media instead of me.’ And you know what? He’d be great at it.”

THE PITCHER who wanted to play shortstop and would love to catch has already won a Gold Glove, a Silver Slugger and a Cy Young, a kind of Field-Hit-and-Pitch trifecta that Greinke himself will tell you has been completed by only two

others: “Orel Hershisser and Fernando Valenzuela. I think it’s a more exciting game in the National League.”

If Greinke hits the free-agent market again this off-season, as expected, he likely will have the Dodgers and the Giants at the top of his list. Said one team source, “Zack knows everything about payrolls, budgets and resources. He’s got a list right now of the six most likely places. He knows exactly what his market is.”

Meanwhile, he has kept his social anxiety disorder under control.

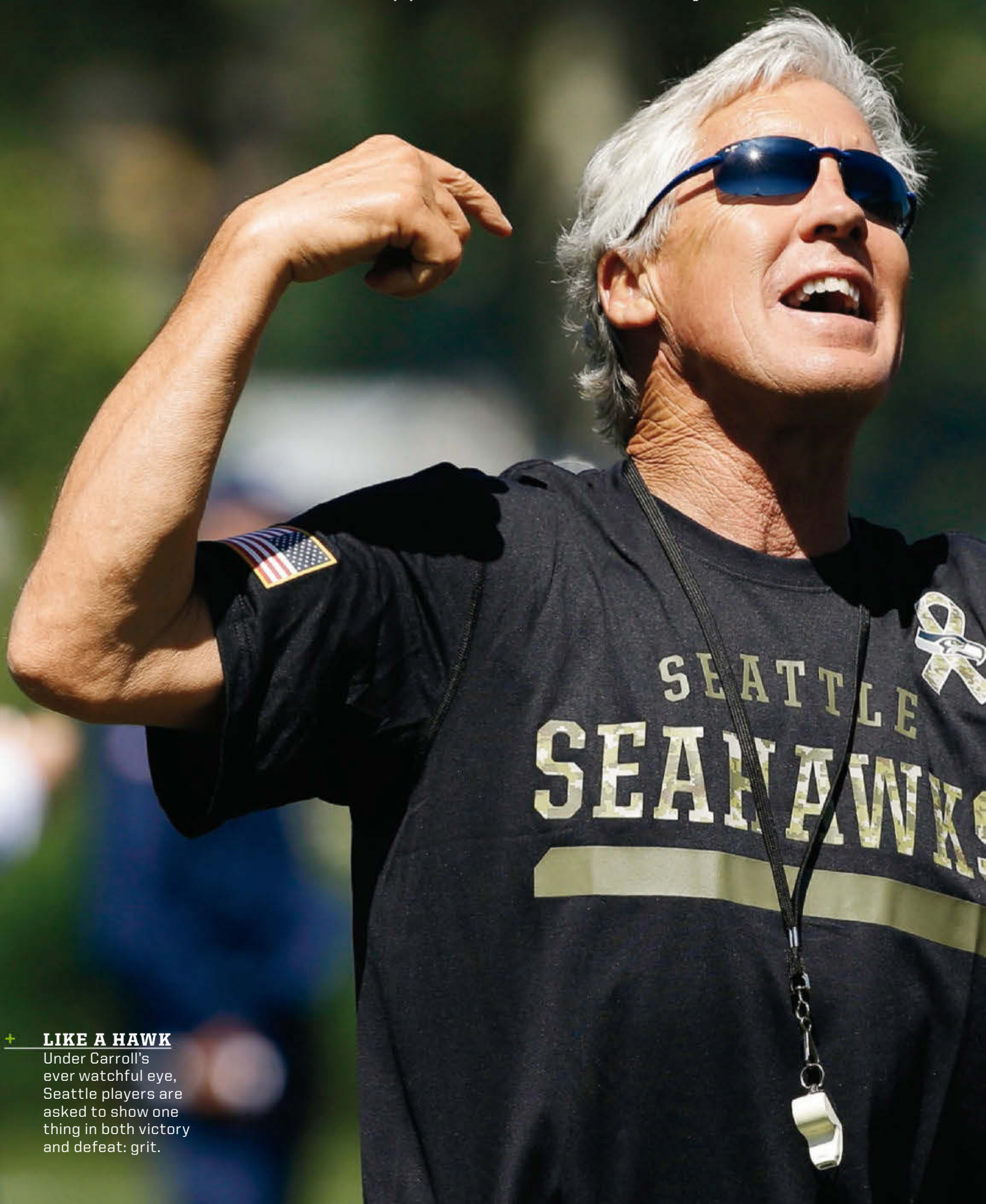
“It’s pretty much the same I’ve been doing for however long, I guess,” Greinke says. “I still have good days and bad days—not like the worst days of everyone in the world, but like I have better days than others. Every time that happens, it’s not like I have to switch medicines. It’s just normal life stuff, I assume.”

Drysdale was 31 during his streak, the same age Greinke is now. After his scoreless run ended on a sacrifice fly on the last of three career RBIs by the Phillies’ Howie Bedell, Drysdale made only 29 more starts before a sore shoulder forced him into retirement. Hershisser turned 30 during his streak and ended that season with a 2.77 ERA; it would be 4.17 over 10 more years.

In July it was Greinke’s turn to be baseball’s third king of nothingness, its master of chronic deprivation. Every Greinke pitch begins the same. He pulls the baseball behind his body, out of the batter’s view, as he points his glove toward the target. Everything stays so well in the same linear path—left arm, head, then right arm, then ball release—that Greinke could deliver a pitch down the narrow aisle of a regional jet. The hitter doesn’t see the ball until just before Greinke lets go of it. All five pitches come from spots that vary by no more than about an inch, an imperceptible difference to a hitter.

Then the real artistry happens. The baseball behaves as Greinke intends, to the befuddlement of hitters. Rarely across baseball history has the most fundamental principle of pitching—prevent the other team from scoring—been exercised this brilliantly for this long. □

A gutsy coaching call cost his Seahawks a ring at sweating it. Instead he's using lessons learned from rappers, dancers and Army officers—to boost his



+ LIKE A HAWK

Under Carroll's ever watchful eye, Seattle players are asked to show one thing in both victory and defeat: grit.

Super Bowl XLIX, but **Pete Carroll** isn't the defeat—and counsel from visiting team's chances for a return to the top

THIS

BY GREG BISHOP

Who's Moved On? GUY

Photograph by
Elaine Thompson
AP



FIVE MONTHS after “giving the game away”—his words—Pete Carroll introduces his latest guest at the Seahawks’ auditorium in Renton, Wash. Du-Shaunt Stegall, a 20-year-old

professional dancer who goes by Fik-Shun, climbs atop the same stage where the Seattle coach has previously welcomed violinists, psychology professors, rappers, coaches, golfers and generals, as well as Grammy and Nobel Prize winners.

Fik-Shun is much like the players he will be addressing: He figured out what he wanted to do early on, mastered his craft and won Season 10 of *So You Think You Can Dance*.

Before he became famous, Fik-Shun competed on *Live to Dance*, another reality show, hosted by Paula Abdul. In the semifinals he flipped and landed funny; his hands buckled and his arms caved, and he fell on his face on national TV.

His pride was hurt most. The fall paralyzed Fik-Shun in performances, as he obsessed over perfection. He canceled gigs. He wondered whether he even wanted to dance anymore. “I had to stop blaming myself,” he says. “I had to accept what happened. I had to stop wondering, Is this the time I’ll fall on my face again?”

That was four years ago. The Seahawks’ fall-on-your-face moment came in February, on a much grander stage: the final seconds of Super Bowl XLIX. Carroll’s choice to throw the ball on second-and-goal from the Patriots’ one-yard-line—where New England cornerback Malcolm Butler intercepted Russell Wilson, sealing a four-point win—is regarded by some as the single worst decision in title-game history.

Afterward, Carroll grieved for all of one morning. Then he moved on to 2015, the same way he confronted the previous off-season following the Seahawks’ win in Super Bowl XLVIII. Carroll, like Fik-Shun, believes in the power of perspective.

He believes, most of all, in his approach.

IT SOUNDS strange to hear Carroll say this, but it comes as comfortably as he might say good morning or hello: “It’s been thrilling to go through this. It really has.”

He means this off-season, the one after the game that will forever be remembered for Carroll’s call. He says this in June from his corner office at the Seahawks’ training facility, the stereo cranked way up, Lake Washington gleaming beyond the practice fields out the window. He’s resting on a couch, but this discussion—explaining how his team will rebound from a moment that most Seattle fans still can’t bring themselves to watch again—is more interrogation than psychotherapy. “If you hope I’m going to cry over the deal, I’m not,” Carroll says. “I’ve moved past that.”

In fact Carroll has so thoroughly moved past last season that he says he’s done talking about how the Super Bowl ended in any detail. The explanation hasn’t changed anyway: The Seahawks threw the ball because they wanted to maximize the number of

summer of red carpets, the celebrity softball games and movie cameos—he worried about and addressed them. He told his players to come back, ready to work, once they did what they had to do and processed what they had gone through.

“Now,” Carroll says, “it’s dealing with loss and giving the game away. Either way, you’re dealing.”

What he *didn’t* do is tell his players to forget about the defeat. He doesn’t want them to. He’ll never forget the 2006 Rose Bowl, when as USC’s coach he left Heisman winner Reggie Bush on the sideline and handed the ball to LenDale White on a fourth-quarter fourth-and-two from Texas’s 45. The Longhorns stuffed White and scored on their next drive to win the game, and the same critics who panned Carroll for throwing late against the Pats lambasted him for the decisions he made against UT. He never ignored that moment or banished it from his memory or said it didn’t hurt like hell. He confronted it. And it has fueled him. Says Carroll,

SUPER BOWL XLIX: The Climax



4TH QTR 2:06 Julian Edelman’s TD caps a 10-play, 64-yard drive, to put the Pats up 28-24.



2:02 After a touchback, Wilson’s 31-yard pass to Lynch takes Seattle to midfield.



1:14 Four plays later Jermaine Kearse bobbles his way to an epic 33-yard reception.

plays they could run; an incomplete pass would have stopped the clock. They had also identified run-stopping defensive personnel. Still, all signs—three feet from the end zone, with three downs and one timeout remaining, plus a running back known as Beast Mode—pointed toward a simple run, straight ahead.

Carroll believes he made the right call. He’s never wavered there. Where some people say “worst possible decision,” he says “worst possible *outcome*.” That’s his distinction, and he’s sticking to it. But that won’t stop the questions. “I know you want to find out—everybody wants to find out, the intrigue, the depth and all that,” he says. “And how much it hurt.

“You’ll never know. I can’t make you understand. You pour everything in your life into something and—it goes right, it goes wrong—it’s in you. It becomes part of you. I’m not going to ignore it. I’m going to face it. And when it bubbles up, I’m going to think about it and get on with it. And use it. *Use it!*”

In 2014, Carroll approached Seattle’s Super Bowl win the same way. Even as he publicly downplayed all the distractions—the

“It’s much easier for me [to move forward] than most people.”

The NFL calendar allows little time for the Seahawks to recover anyway. They traded for Saints tight end Jimmy Graham, lost free-agent cornerback Byron Maxwell to the Eagles and signed Philly’s Cary Williams to replace him. They drafted Michigan defensive end Frank Clark and had to answer questions about his arrest record. They negotiated with Wilson on a new contract but have yet to reach an agreement.

No rest for the conquered. Few Seahawks mentioned the Super Bowl after February, unless someone asked about it. Carroll focused instead on his team’s tempo and energy and attitude. He spewed the sort of New Age performance psychology that led one of his players to compare him to Willy Wonka.

Looking at his roster, Carroll says this team is deeper than it was a year ago, closer to what it was when they won Super Bowl XLVIII. “The challenge is out there again. Here we go,” he says. His eyes narrow. “Do you hear what I’m saying?

“We’ll come out of this better than if we had won.”

THE EMAIL from Ben Malcolmson, Carroll's assistant, landed in the in-box of Angela Duckworth, a psychology professor at Penn. Duckworth had never heard of Carroll, so she prepared to politely decline his invitation to connect. That is, until one of her research coordinators, a sports fan who knew of Carroll and his coaching methods, suggested she might learn something from the coach.

Carroll had become aware of Duckworth through a TED Talk she gave, the inspiration for which was that she couldn't figure out why the brightest middle and high school math students she once taught hadn't always handed in the best work. She zeroed in on a concept that felt familiar to Carroll. Unknowingly, she was talking about his approach, and she had a name for it: grit. "I'm interested in how culture influences grit," says Duckworth. "And Pete has very deliberately created a culture that encourages passion and perseverance—the two components of grit."

only what he wanted to accomplish but how he would go about it. He filled legal pads and the outsides of manila folders with so many notes that he ran out of space to write. He dissected every aspect of performance. Details that seemed small—like having players preorder for the Trojans' omelet station in order to save a few minutes at breakfast each morning—were implemented to improve efficiency. He asked his assistant coaches to explain their vision in 30 words or less, and then he invited Snoop Dogg and Bubba Watson and janitors and actors and CEOs onto campus and asked them the same thing.

He turned the Trojans into a powerhouse and all those notes into a book called *Win Forever*. To Carroll, it became less about the victories and more about the process. He exposed the Trojans to myriad influences, demanded they put in the work and then supported their follow-through. If it all felt a little rah-rah—some called him Pom-Pom Pete—what mattered most was that his players believed him. "Pete's done it differently than anybody's ever done it," says Yogi Roth, who cowrote Carroll's book. "He's so far out there in his thinking and his thought process. It's so connected to his spirit."

Carroll left USC for the Seahawks in 2010. (Shortly afterward the NCAA slapped the Trojans with a two-year bowl ban, the loss of 30 scholarships and the forfeiture of 13 victories from '04 and '05 for various infractions under his watch.) Early on he told Roth that in the NFL he would not waver on his holistic approach. He'd seen in New England—where players started showing up late to meetings, or not showing up at all—how selfish acts could unravel seasons full of promise.

"Everyone said he couldn't coach in the NFL," says Mike Garrett, Carroll's athletic director at USC. "They said he was a college coach. But I always felt like he wanted to go back. Like he had something to prove."

Carroll did not adapt his approach for pro players, guys who are supposed to roll their eyes at Tell The Truth Monday or Competition Wednesday, those motivational gimmicks that purportedly work best in college. He hired a competitive surfer-turned-sports-psychologist. He studied sleep patterns. He brought in Bill Russell and Will Ferrell and Jon Gruden as guest speakers. He held a shooting competition between former SuperSonics Detlef Schrempf and Shawn Kemp, complete with a fog machine, a laser-light show and introductions from CenturyLink Field's P.A. announcer. He sought advice from musicians like Macklemore and a former president, Bill Clinton.

"It always came back to competitiveness," he says of the motivational ploys, the nontraditional hirings, the myriad guests. "I didn't have a word for it, but it's striving for something, not against something. Then I found a name for it."

Grit.



1:06 On first-and-goal from New England's five-yard line, Lynch peels off four.

0:26 With a yard to go, Seattle snubs Beast Mode, only to see its title hopes picked off.

In Carroll she sees what psychologists call an authoritative parent: warm but demanding, unconditionally supportive but with high expectations. And so she agreed to meet with the Seahawks. No one mentioned the Super Bowl by name, but everything they talked about was really about Seattle's moving past it.

The Tao of Pete didn't fully form until Carroll was well into his 40s, in his third decade as a football coach. He had a personality and a style, but he didn't have a system. Nothing that he'd written down. Or turned into a book. The Jets fired him from his first head coaching gig after one season, the Patriots after three. It's not that Carroll failed; his record in four seasons as an NFL coach stood at a respectable 33–31. But major success had eluded him.

He took a sabbatical, almost a year off, in 2000. There's a famous story about the epiphany Carroll had around this time. He was reading a book by John Wooden that described how it took the old UCLA coach 18 years to win his first national title. And then Carroll slammed the book shut, inspired. He took the USC job in December of that year and started to write down not

STEVE KERR flew to the Seahawks' headquarters last August. He had spent his life in basketball but had never coached a game before the Warriors called him that May. "I felt bad at first," Carroll says of the challenge that lay ahead for Kerr. "I said, 'Goddang, we've got some work to do.'"

Kerr came to study Carroll. He admired the way the Seahawks played, the balance they exhibited between complete freedom and total discipline, their style at once loose and meticulously planned. He spoke to the players and lost a shooting contest to receiver Bryan Walters and shadowed the coach who never stops walking or talking or turning up the music or chewing gum like he's furious at Wrigley.

What stood out most to Kerr was the number of strong personalities on Seattle's roster and how Carroll encouraged rather than restricted what made them different from their teammates. Where so many football coaches seek conformity, Carroll demands the opposite. "Pete can do that because it's genuine," Kerr says. "You have to have the right personality to sell it. That style suits him. I don't think Bill Belichick could pull it off."

Kerr went back to Golden State and, with a team of what seemed like random parts (oh, and the best shooter in the league), won the NBA championship in June. As Carroll watched the finals and sent Kerr text messages of congratulations and support, this is what he saw: The Warriors looked like the Seahawks.

Carroll calls what Kerr witnessed a "celebration of uniqueness," and that, too, can sound like psychobabble, or one of those clichés that coaches cling to. It helps that Carroll is not exactly typical for his profession. He celebrates his own uniqueness daily.

Kris Richard, the Seahawks' new defensive coordinator (Dan Quinn left to coach the Falcons this off-season), played cornerback for Carroll at USC. He still remembers his first Trojans team meeting, the energy that "just oozed off" the man who seemed to have Red Bull running through his veins. "At that time [the program was] kind of beaten down, and he was trying to breathe life into us," Richard says. "He'd have us out in the Coliseum late at night, playing tug-of-war."

The Seahawks under Carroll can sometimes resemble an island of misfit toys, but that is by design. He applauds Marshawn Lynch for never speaking to the media just as he applauds cornerback Richard Sherman for always speaking his mind. Safety Earl Thomas can opine about having warrior blood, Wilson can reveal that he's not having sex with his girlfriend, pop star Ciara—these

don't strike Carroll as distractions. As long as no one disrupts the team's chemistry—*see ya, Percy Harvin*—it's all good.

Carroll explains this in a way that only he can. "We're developing the human properties by reaching into people and bringing out whatever the best is they have to offer," he says, sounding like the CEO of a Silicon Valley startup.

For years Seattle's billionaire owner, Paul Allen, never came to practice. Then one day in 2010 he showed up. Carroll's best friend, Dave Perron, happened to be there, and he remembers wondering aloud about Allen's presence. *Because*, Carroll shrugged. He had asked Allen to stop by.

"Pete is one of the most vibrant, positive people I have met in my life," says Carroll's friend Ben Haggerty, better known to music fans as Macklemore. "He never turns it off. There's a definite rhythm to how he moves about his day."

Which isn't to say that Carroll is automatic; his approach is always personalized. Consider his handling of defensive end Lawrence Jackson, who had 10 sacks his sophomore season at USC, in 2005, but fell into a slump the next year, beset by pressure and the death of a close cousin. Carroll gave Jackson one of his favorite books, *The Inner Game of Tennis*. Reading it,

Jackson stumbled upon an analogy about how a cat didn't think about how to capture a bird, didn't consider how high to jump or how fast. The cat simply reacted. The next game, Jackson bagged three sacks. Bird caught.

Later Jackson played for the Lions, but in Detroit he was conscious of whom he ate with in the dining room and whom he spoke with on the practice field, and eventually his career petered out. "If you don't feel your individuality is respected, a piece of you doesn't show

up to work," Jackson says. "You can't be who you are. Pete understands you can't reach everybody the same way."

Those who know Carroll laugh at the perception that he's too nice, too New Age, the Kumbaya Coach. They point to his first year with the Seahawks, when he and general manager John Schneider led the NFL with 284 transactions. Carroll's as competitive as Belichick, and he can be as ruthless too. "I'm not saying that when the smoke clears and you look close, he's an ass----," says Lawyer Milloy, who played safety for Carroll in New England and Seattle. "He's everything that everybody sees. But do not mistake it: He's as competitive as anybody in the history of football."

+ SEATTLE, SLEW

Amidst confetti meant for another, Carroll took a walk of shame after his fateful call.



"His style suits him," says Kerr. "I don't think Belichick could pull it off."

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Which is why Carroll sees Seattle's Super Bowl failure as another example of uniqueness—just not one that he will be celebrating.

WHEN CARROLL met with Lieut. Gen. Robert Brown, in March 2013, the two men talked for hours about leadership. Brown explained how every year the Army accepted a new batch of grunts, and how roughly one third of them underachieved. That didn't happen at USC to Carroll (who says 95% of his guys bought into the program) and Brown wondered why.

He guessed it had something to do with Carroll's understanding of "the human dimension." Then he relayed another story. Every year the Army would send its best men to the elite 75th Ranger Regiment, he said, and about 30% lasted. Eventually, leadership decided to invest more in the process, to better prepare those select few for the rigorous Ranger training. The next year, 80% made it through. Hearing that "was a profound moment," Carroll says. "I realized, We had mentored our guys. We didn't let them fail. [At USC] that was justified with how our guys could get drafted really high and then didn't do as well as expected [in the NFL]. We weren't there with them, to help them do their best.

"Then it started to make sense, the role we were playing."

Over the last two or three seasons Carroll's approach has crystallized. "I can't tell you I always knew," he says. "I didn't. I was just winging it."

In Seattle, Carroll has filled his staff with familiar faces, like strength coach Chris Carlisle, who at the end of his first interview with Carroll, back at USC, disclosed that he had Hodgkin's disease and would soon begin chemotherapy treatments.

"Is that going to make you a different coach?" Carroll asked.

"No, sir."

"Can you be here Monday?"

Carlisle, cancer-free since 2005, has watched Carroll implement his USC system in Seattle—"just change the colors," he says—but he's also seen Carroll adapt his ways in recent years. The coach formed a cabinet of sorts, allowing a dozen players to address concerns from inside the locker room. He cut down on his own outside endeavors (other than his charity work) and just focused on coaching. He eschewed writing another book. It was all football and grandkids. "If anything," says Dennis Slutak, who coached special teams for Carroll at USC,

"the NFL allowed Pete to be Pete more than college did. It's like his approach is better suited there."

Slowly, Carroll began to understand why he operated the way he did, and why it worked in both college and in the NFL. The more people he spoke with, the more tweaks he made. There was never another *Aha!* moment like the epiphany of 2000. Coaching became more of a quest.

Winning the Super Bowl required changes; losing the Super Bowl will require more. But at its core the system remains the same. "I'm more mindful of what it takes to do this," Carroll says. "I was lost for a long time. I didn't know what I was doing. I have a clearer picture now."

+ FOR PETE'S SAKE

Carroll is counting on Wilson (in red), his fourth-year quarterback, to keep the faith.



"I'm not saying he's an ass----," says Milloy.
"But he's as competitive as anybody."

Carroll told friends before the Super Bowl last February that he'd never had more fun, that the culture he'd created had never been more supported or more firmly embraced.

Then he made *The Call*. And the Seahawks lost. And his friends—close ones, anyway—teased him that he needed a new title for his book: *Win Once in a While*.

ON THE day that billionaire Steve Ballmer found out he would be allowed to buy the Clippers, he was sitting in Carroll's office. Here were a couple of neighbors: the former CEO of Microsoft, a man who invited Carroll to his house for Seder; and the coach he wanted to quiz

about how to implement a different culture in pro sports. "He's telling me about all these situations he's been in," Ballmer says of that meeting, "and how he learned to approach all of them the same way." The firings, the sabattical, the epiphany, the college dynasty, fourth-and-two, the sanctions, the Super Bowl win, the NFL powerhouse—everything Carroll has gone through prepared him to better deal with the evening of Feb. 1, 2015.

No one knows for certain how the Seahawks will react, or if they will continue to listen, or if losing a game the way they lost Super Bowl XLIX will leave a permanent scar, do irreparable damage, or crack the fragile chemistry of a locker room full of oddballs. "All the principles, everything we ever talked about, came to light in the last few years," Carroll says. "We need all of it."

Carroll called Perron the week after the Super Bowl, but otherwise the two friends have not discussed the game itself and how it ended. Carroll just wanted to go over what he planned to tell the team. He wanted to frame this epic defeat as a teachable



moment, even though some of his players were sure to roll their eyes.

Then he dived into the off-season. The whole front office did. In recent weeks, Schneider read *The Obstacle Is the Way*, a book about stoicism and turning trials into triumph. That's Carroll's influence. But even Schneider acknowledges there is a danger, especially now, that players will not buy into Carroll's program the way they once did. When Schneider worked for coach Marty Schottenheimer in Kansas City in the late '90s, Schottenheimer instructed him never to stay anywhere more than 10 years because "players will stop listening to you." But the modern NFL landscape, with the salary cap and constant player movement, Schneider argues, makes it easier to implement a philosophy when every season brings so many new faces. "Pete is not going to change who he is," Schneider says.

Six months after the disaster, six months after giving the game away, the sell remains the same. It's hope that Carroll peddles. "I want our whole organization to show off how to overcome stuff," Carroll says. "I want us to demonstrate resilience, which is one of the foundations of grit. We're going to demonstrate it, just like we demonstrated the resilience to win. That was freakin' awesome, to get back [to the Super Bowl last year] when everybody said there was no chance. We're going to face all that again; there's some comfort in that. We know how we're going to do this. Here we go."

Carroll steals a glance at the clock on his office wall. He has a team meeting to attend, energy to crank up, minds to convince, a philosophy to cement. It's time to move the Seahawks one step away from their last game and one step closer to their next one. "What a great freakin' day," says football's eternal optimist. "It's an opportunity as much as anything.

"How strong can we be?" □



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AS HE TRIES TO
REBRAND THE
UNDERACHIEVING
LONGHORNS, NEW
TEXAS COACH
SHAKA SMART
INVITED SI TO TWO
DAYS OF WORKOUTS.
ENTHUSIASM AND
APPRECIATION,
ANYONE?

BY BRIAN HAMILTON

→ **AT 2:36 P.M.** on Tuesday, June 23, Shaka Smart surveys the Texas basketball weight room. There's an expectant murmur of activity before another breakneck conditioning session begins at the top of the hour. Players trickle in. Assistants make small talk. Smart, who left VCU last spring and became the hire of the college basketball off-season, sets his gaze upon junior guard Kendal Yancy, who is rolling out a leg muscle.

It is Enthusiasm Tuesday. Smart assigns one of his five core values—appreciation, enthusiasm, unselfishness, teamship and accountability—to each day of the week. Today he has asked his team to infuse passion into every activity. This helps explain why the 38-year-old coach is creeping slowly across the room, crouching like a predator in the underbrush. In a burst Smart pounces on Yancy's back and attempts to wrestle him to the floor.

Smart and the 20-year-old player grab at each other's legs and apply headlocks, standing up only to tumble to the green turf again. The struggle lasts for a couple of minutes and ends with Smart on his back. Yancy releases his grip, and Smart jumps to his feet. There is a rule, after all, in his program: If you're down, you

have one second to get up. Smart then spies senior guard Javan Felix, one of many amused observers.

"You're next!" Smart barks.

With heaps of in-state talent, abundant resources and a nationally recognized brand, Texas has the capacity to be a powerhouse program, but the Longhorns have appeared in just one Final Four since 1947. Over two summer days SI got an inside look as Smart and his staff began the process of rewiring—psychologically and tactically, on the floor and off—a team that hasn't reached the Sweet 16 since 2008. Maybe the new coaches will extract every drop of potential and win

championships. Maybe the system and philosophies won't translate to the major-conference level. What is clear is that the Longhorns will be fast and aggressive, and they'll have a lot of fun.

They may not exactly replicate Havoc, the defensive scheme and way of life that elevated VCU to national prominence in Smart's six seasons there. But Smart has the Longhorns thinking his way so far. "We want to go out and just manhandle people," senior guard DeMarcus Holland says. "When we step [off] the court, win or lose, you know you had a fight."

THE SQUAWK of a whistle breaks the silence on Dozier Court at 6 a.m. on June 22. "Make sure this is our best week of the summer," Smart says in a prepractice huddle. "It starts now. Doesn't end until Friday. Make this the best week yet."

Smart is gifted with uncommon charisma and a relentlessly positive outlook, but he is just like every other coach taking on a new job. He must motivate strangers to buy what he is selling. This is Appreciation Monday, and Smart gives every player homework. Each must demonstrate non-verbal appreciation to someone that day—a hug, a smile—and report back. "It's tough to do," says Holland, who will fulfill his duty by hugging the

ne Day



FIRST IN SHOW

By wrestling his players and diving for loose balls in practice, Smart sets an example of the relentlessness he expects.

Photographs by
Greg Nelson
For Sports Illustrated

strength coaches, “but he wants to hear about it.” Smart demands that his players live his core values.

The Texas staff believes that nurturing strong relationships is fundamental to getting players to buy in. “The way that we want to play starts well beyond those lines,” says assistant coach Mike Morrell, who was on Smart’s VCU staff for four years. Days after he was hired on April 3, Smart dropped by the apartment shared by Felix and senior centers Cam Ridley and Prince Ibeh to watch the NCAA tournament championship game. Not long after that, forward Shaq Cleare was finishing homework in San Jacinto Residence Hall when his phone buzzed. Smart was asking if he could visit. Then the new coach alerted guard Isaiah Taylor. “He texted me, ‘I’m at the dorms,’ ” Taylor says. “I’m like, What? What are you doing here?” The three watched NBA games, talked about life, family and the coaching change. “It’s just a good feeling,” Taylor says. “Never seen a coach in a dorm before.”

“I’m not doing it to make them surprised,” Smart says. “Every coach has his style, and no one way is necessarily the best. I just try to be around these guys. The relationship part of it is what’s going to allow us to move to the next step.”

Smart is interested in more than just hanging out. When Felix failed a test in a psychology class in April, Smart told the veteran guard to forget it and just do everything he could to ace the next one. Felix studied harder, even getting some help from Smart in the coach’s office, and passed the course. “It’s just a positive, aggressive mind-set, if that makes sense,” Felix says. “Attack the day—that’s what he says all the time. Just attack the day and do what you can do to get better.” The Longhorns don’t rip former coach Rick Barnes, but some say he was too focused on the negative. Says Ibeh, “[Barnes] would point out things like, *We’ve missed some of our expectations and goals, and we’re*

in danger of missing them completely, or missing the tournament. You keep that in the back of your mind and still try to focus on playing, it’s just difficult.”

STRENGTH COACH Daniel Roose, another VCU import, has a white Texas basketball binder on his desk with the phrase TRANSFORM YOUR BODY on the cover. It is not enough to be in great shape to play for Smart. You must *evolve*. Before the first practice on this Monday, the no-nonsense Roose threatened tardy players by wielding a four-foot wooden pole that had duct tape on one end, from the time he broke it over a countertop. “He can kind of be a jerk, and guys like it,” Smart says. “Kids respond to him being a hard-ass. They don’t like that from me.”

Before a 2 p.m. Monday workout, Roose challenged the players—“This morning, as a group, we were not ready,” he said—and then a well-choreographed hell broke loose.

The next 40 minutes were a blur. Roose demonstrated how to start a shuttle-run drill on all fours. “I don’t care how you get up,” he said. “Do it fast.” The players then sprinted to a weightlifting station. After a set they hustled to do the shuttle run. The sequence repeated without rest. There were no water breaks. Roose screamed the whole time. Sometimes at the whole group—“Pace! Pace! Pace! We gotta go!”—or sometimes at an individual, such as when Taylor was executing a trap-bar deadlift. “Attack! Attack!” Roose barked in his ear as teammates surrounded the junior guard and clapped.

“Monday my voice is really good,” Roose said. “It’s all downhill from here.”

The players understand what their new coaches are after in these daily torments. “You can’t

*“He texted me,
I’m at the dorms,”
Taylor says.
“I’m like, What?
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?
Never seen a
coach in
a dorm before.”*

CRY HAVOC

Smart will employ many aspects of the system he used to great success at VCU, and he will also find a way to maximize the talents of players such as Taylor (far right).





go into Lawrence, Kansas, and win without being a dog,” says 6' 9" forward Connor Lammert. “There’s a method to what they’re doing. They’re turning us slowly into ravenous beasts.”

A few hours after Monday’s afternoon workout, Smart joined some of his Longhorns and Roose at the training table. When Holland sat down, Roose remarked that the senior had kept the evening’s streak alive: Not one player put a vegetable on his tray.

At the other end of the table, Smart smiled.

“The corn bread has jalapeños,” he said.

Over dinner Smart asked players about the Confederate-flag controversy in South Carolina. They discussed NBA free agency. Smart asked if anyone was excited about the season-opening game in Shanghai, where the Longhorns will play Washington.

After debating next year’s *Batman v Superman* film—“Who you got in that? I got Superman,” Smart said—the table cleared out. In a few hours it would be Enthusiasm Tuesday. Smart told his players not to show up for morning practice unless they have “crazy” enthusiasm. Hearing this, Holland insisted he would outenthuse his coach.

“You’re not going to have more than me,” Smart said.

“I will,” Holland replied.

“We’ll see,” Smart said.

ADOPTING HAVOC does not necessarily mean that Texas’s tempo will be among the fastest in D-I.

When VCU reached the Final Four, in 2010–11, Smart’s team was the slowest in his tenure with the Rams, ranked 196th nationally in tempo (possessions per 40 minutes, adjusted for opponent) according to kenpom.com. VCU had a top 25 ranking in tempo just once, in ’13–14. But Texas fans should notice a difference this season, after the Longhorns ranked 300th nationally in tempo in ’14–15. With a roster stocked with athletic guards and wings, Smart will not apply the brakes often.

Holland (46.4% from three-point range in 2014–15) can be a floor-spreader, and the Texas staff knows they could have a post force in the 285-pound Ridley, who averaged nearly a double double as a sophomore (11.2 points, 8.2 rebounds) before dipping to 8.0 and 5.3 last season. In May, assistant coach Darrin Horn visited Ridley at home in Houston to reinforce to Ridley’s family how he fit the system.

Then there is Lammert, a 6' 9", 240-pound senior who has the potential to be a true stretch four and thus a matchup problem if he plays with more confidence. “He’s the one that could really change things,” Horn says of the forward who hasn’t averaged more than 5.8 points per game in his career.

Taylor, the 6' 1" guard who led the

team in scoring last year (13.1 ppg), will be at the center of everything. He returned for his junior season due to a combination of lukewarm evaluations from the NBA, the prospects of Texas’s new system and a recommendation from ShawnDre’ Jones, a former AAU teammate now playing for Richmond, VCU’s crosstown rival. “Man, y’all got a good coach, and you’re going to like him,” Taylor recalls Jones saying.

Jones was right. Taylor says he collapsed in the locker room for about 90 minutes after his first summer workout—“It was just so hard to move,” he says—but he looks more muscular. Taylor is custom-fit for an offense that requires guards to create. He has the physicality to be voracious in ball-screen defense; during one practice Taylor harassed Eric Davis Jr. until the freshman fell to the floor. The key now is for Taylor to learn to impart his confidence to everyone else instead of sagging when a teammate can’t match his level of intensity or talent. “He’s gotten tremendously better,” says assistant David Cason. “A lot of the great players have some of the same traits—*Hey, I can do that, why can’t you?* Once he channels that, we’ll have a chance.”

Taylor merely wants a chance at atonement, after a disappointing sophomore experience in general. “It wasn’t satisfying at all,” he says. “We had big expectations, and we didn’t meet [them]. I [broke my wrist in November], came back, got

back in my groove, but we were still losing games. The cohesion wasn't there for the team. I think we're getting that back now. The new staff, they bring something that we were missing last year."

It is a tricky thing, teaching on-court energy, especially to a roster of veterans. It starts with Smart and his coaches being the example. Smart has been known to dive for loose balls, and his assistants—Morrell, Cason and Horn—jump into full-court pressure drills. Celebrating small victories is common; Smart spikes a ball to the floor with two hands if he sees something he likes. "I don't know that we're the most enthusiastic coaching staff in the country," Morrell says, "but I know if we're not, we're up near the top."

High energy is the most obvious hallmark of Smart's coaching philosophy, but he and his staff don't neglect fundamentals. After a shot Cason corrects his guards on floor balance. "We're creating a bad habit here," the assistant says. "The shot goes up, you guys have to get back to the center circle. That's nonnegotiable." In fact, the Longhorns are trying to learn new habits. Over two days Smart offers instruction on defending perimeter hand-offs, fronting post players in transition and how big men should set screens. He even teaches guard-to-guard passes. "Throw it through his chin," Smart tells freshman Kerwin (Snoop) Roach. "Hard."

"I would rather us be really simple and do the things that we do well," Smart says later, "than be complicated and not be very good at anything."

THE MAN who is changing nearly everything about Texas basketball hates change. "I don't like wearing a new pair of shoes," Smart says. "I like what I like, you know what I mean?" He appreciates familiarity, prefers to know what he'll get out of a situation. The unknown unsettles him. He tells a story: When he was a child, his grandmother sent him on a bus ride from Milwaukee to Chicago, to visit his



YOU BETTER WORK

Roose (blue shorts) is after more than just fitness from the Longhorns; he expects to transform them into, as Lammert puts it, "ravenous beasts."

grandfather. Smart was petrified. *What if he's not there?* he asked. His grandmother assured him he had nothing to worry about. It was not until Smart saw his grandfather's face that he was convinced.

There are plenty of unknowns now. Will Texas be able to sign championship-caliber recruits who operate according to Smart's principles? "If he's an ass---, we're out," Cason says of a theoretical five-star recruit who might

have trouble committing to Smart's five core values. "Just plain and simple."

On June 22 coveted power forward prospect P.J. Washington emerged from a large white van for a campus visit, greeted by nearly every Texas staffer. He is one of 14 top players from the classes of 2016, '17 and '18 who have come through Austin since Smart's arrival. (Another, four-star guard, Jacob Young from Houston, committed on June 30.) Smart is confident he will coach "some pretty special guys" at Texas, but can he fend off in-state competition and invaders like Kentucky and Duke and North Carolina, all of which have inked five-star Lone Star prospects since 2013?

Nonbasketball questions nag as well,

as a report published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in June alleged that multiple men's basketball players received impermissible academic assistance during Barnes's tenure as coach. Texas issued a statement saying that the school had no information that Barnes was involved in any academic improprieties. Separately, a June 18 story from *Horns Digest* painted a withering picture of athletic director Steve Patterson. The story claims he alienated donors, misled season-ticket holders and slashed budgets for nonrevenue sports. "It's really important for us to practice what we preach to our guys," Smart says. "If we're going to talk to our guys about focusing on the control category, then we need to focus on the control category."

Right now he's focused on conditioning. "Can I jump in?" Smart asks Roose before a Tuesday session. His name is added, in purple marker, to the second of four

workout groups: *Connor. Isaiah. Coach.*

After stretching, Smart takes his place in line behind Lammert and Taylor. The four groups hurl medicine balls against the wall. "This is the best group right here," Smart says, to no one in particular. Smart finishes his last set, then walks the medicine ball back to an equipment shelf by himself.

Everyone hurries between bench presses and band lifts; Smart grimaces when he grabs the tension bands and flings his arms above his head violently. "Explode, baby!" he shouts at Yancy. "That's why you can't outwrestle me!" Lammert then works through a set of inverted barbell rows, while Smart, wearing a weight vest, holds the power forward's legs and feet in the air.

Though Smart draws a dirty look from Ridley when he grabs a bottle of water—Ridley refuses a sip when Smart offers—the good vibe is palpable. This is supposed

to be Texas's best week yet. Roose is nearly silent as the workout winds down. "Sometimes when the energy is good, I just let them go," he says. "Really, it's the best we've had, the last two days."

The session ends, and Roose brings the group in. He talks about how much he has enjoyed these two days of training because he has not had to be the most energetic person in the room. "I think Coach won that today," Roose says, smiling, "but y'all have done that collectively." He is not hoarse. The message comes across loud and clear.

The veterans filter back to the locker room. Another long day of work is behind them. Smart lingers behind, sipping more water. He catches sight of Davis, the freshman guard, arriving for a 4 p.m. workout. Smart is still sweaty, still a bit out of breath. His work has only begun.

"E," Smart says, "are you ready to attack the day?" □

**IT'S LIKE
YOUR TONGUE
CRASHED INTO
A CHOCOLATY,
PEANUTY,
CARAMEL
ICEBERG.**



ICE CREAM SATISFACTION

LONG AGO

THE AUTHOR OF **FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS** RETURNED TO
WERE THE HEART OF THE MOST CELEBRATED SPORTS BOOK
THEY? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE REVISIT THE PEOPLE AND



POWER GRIP

From left: Winchell, Chavez and Christian clasped hands on the way out for the coin toss before a game against Midland Lee in October 1988.



Photographs by
Robert Clark



YESTERDAY

THE LONE STAR STATE TO SEE THE SIX BOYS, NOW MEN, WHO
OF OUR ERA. TWENTY-FIVE YEARS HAVE PASSED—OR HAVE
PLACES THAT CHANGED US FOREVER? BY H.G. BISSINGER



I

TOOK THIS route once before, at a different time in my life. I was much younger then, in my 30s, when you can still act impulsively and not suffer permanently for it. I didn't know what to expect then, and I don't know what to expect now. There is a familiar comfort in the landscape: the sprawl of the Dallas Metroplex, like oozing oil; the metallic spires of the refineries in Beaumont and Houston; the Hill Country, dressed in lace and wildflowers; the flatlands of West Texas, where you step off into eternity and wonder if you will ever make it back. A thousand miles through Texas with a thousand memories.

I want to resurrect those memories, since I am now 60, when you forget far more than you remember. I hate going back in my life, and I am not a believer in nostalgia. But on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the publication of *Friday Night Lights*, I feel compelled to return. It was a linchpin moment of my life. *The moment*, to be honest.

Return—and not just to famous and infamous Odessa. The controversy that exploded after the publication of the book, in September 1990, made me a marked man. I had to cancel the Odessa stop on my book tour. The anger there was palpable. I had revealed the good of Odessa, because there are many good, honest people there, but I had also exposed thick veins of racism and misplaced academic and social priorities. (It wasn't as if you had to go digging around for them.) I have been back to Odessa many times since then, often because of the book or its film version but at other times to see people who had become friends for life. There is no longer the tension of my first return visit, because Odessans are more forgiving than they think, or maybe they just learned to ignore me—an old shoe, dusty and cobwebbed, forgotten in a corner of the closet.

No, the real reason for this return trip is to see the six kids who formed the spine of the book. They were teenagers when I wrote about them. But now they are in their 40s, just as I am no longer the 34-year-old from New York City landing in Odessa in 1988 wearing loafers and an old tweed jacket with elbow patches, researching a book that I knew I had to write even if it meant quitting my newspaper job.

I want to update the lives of these players, learn what paths they have taken and where those paths have led them. I could have done it all by phone and email and Internet. Easier and cheaper. Yet I have to see them face-to-face. I have to see if there is still any emotional connection between us, if any of the power of what we went through together remains. I loved them then. But *love* is the most empty and overused word in the English language after *brilliant*. Twenty-five years ago I went in search of the Friday night lights. Now, during a week in April in Texas, I go searching for those who played under them.

"If you invented a time machine, you'd be the richest man on the planet."

I START WITH Mike Winchell. We arrange to meet at the Fort Worth Stockyards. Mike was the quarterback of the 1988 Permian Panthers, and no one bore the weight of responsibility and pressure more than he did. You could see it in his eyes when the offense wasn't performing: darting and downcast, searching for an answer that would not come. His hands shook in the huddle. But that isn't the Mike who comes back to me as I drive to Fort Worth on Highway 26.

Of all the players I wrote about, Mike was the most mysterious. His intellectual curiosity was singular in a town in which there was virtually no curiosity about anything that lay beyond the Ector County line. Mike reminded me of a tortoise, sticking his

MIKE WINCHELL

Withdrawn and prone to worry in high school (opposite), the former Panthers quarterback has come out of his shell in middle age.



head out to say something funny and insightful and surprising, then ducking his head back in again. He was an elusive interview. After five minutes he inevitably said, "I gotta go," as if he found sustained human interaction unbearably uncomfortable.

I am the first to arrive. I sit on a bench under a rusty pavilion. I'm nervous, so I smoke a cigarette. I saw Mike about 10 years ago, during initial showings of the film *Friday Night Lights*. We spoke only briefly. In the past he was reluctant to talk about the book or himself. "People always want to talk about the book, but I don't care," he told the *Odessa American* in 1998. "That was a long time ago." Now it's an even longer time ago.

Mike ambles up in shorts, a white T-shirt and a green hat with the logo of the Dallas Stars. His legs are spindly, a reminder of his athleticism in football and baseball and golf. There are layers of padding in his face and stomach, as there are on the rest of us.

When he wasn't heaping abuse on himself, there was something whimsical about Mike, a gift for making mischief. In what I thought was a seminal moment during the 1988 season, he asked me if I wanted to go snipe hunting. As a damn Yankee, I

ERS BECOMING OVERACHIEVERS—WAS ABSENT AT BAYLOR. “AT PERMIAN,” HE SAYS, “THEY GOT IT DONE.”



had no idea that snipes did not exist; the point was to drop off a naive idiot in the middle of nowhere and make him walk the long road home after he realized there were no such creatures. When Mike invited me, I considered it a crucial breakthrough—I had finally breached the cultural barrier. It was only through the grace of an assistant coach that the hunt was called off.

“The farther the better,” Mike confesses now. “Show up with stitches and cactus sticking out of your butt. Well, you might be Ivy League, but I’ve never seen a redneck fall that hard for the old snipe-hunting trick.”

Touché.

If time has made Mike a little more corpulent, it has also made him more chatty. I have trouble getting him to shut up. He lives in the small town of Decatur, about 40 miles north of Fort Worth. Much of his family is there, including his mother and two sisters. He works as a lease operator for Devon Energy, overseeing roughly 50 wells. He says he was hired because of his natural anal tendencies.

Mike’s mom, Pat, is the center of his sphere, much as she was in Odessa. She is 81 now, living on her own in a government-assisted apartment in Decatur. She can be ornery, but Mike is used to it. She also has a Texas-sized strain of independence. About five years ago she was in a car accident as a passenger, and she insisted to medics at the scene that she was fine and would just walk home across two busy lanes of traffic. They took her to the local emergency room and then had to airlift her to a hospital; she had a broken leg, broken ribs and internal

bleeding. As Mike retells the story, it is clear that if she had not been taken to the emergency room, she would still be walking home.

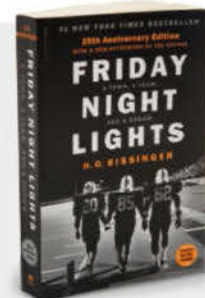
In the film version of *Friday Night Lights*, which came out in 2004, Pat Winchell was played by the actress Connie Cooper as being heavily dependent on medication, although Mike, in reality, goads her to take any prescription. I was there when Mike saw the film for the first time, and his discomfort was obvious. I also wondered what his mother thought. “I wish they had let that lady wear some makeup,” she told Mike after they saw the film together. That was her only comment, despite an astonishing and beautiful performance by Lucas Black as her son. “It’s just not our way,” Mike says.

He still plays golf, although not nearly as much as he did before knee surgery a half-dozen years ago. (At one point he was on the Iron Man Tour, in which you play 27 holes in a single stretch.) He likes to go trout fishing in northern Arkansas, on the White River. He has couch-potato tendencies and is hooked on *Duck Dynasty* and the History channel. He fancies the mystery novels of Daniel Silva, with their historical and religious

references and international intrigue. He is a wonderful uncle to his nieces and nephews. But he never married. “I respect women too much to have them put up with my crap,” he says.

After Permian, Mike went to Baylor and played quarterback on the scout team as a freshman. He might have made the traveling squad had he stayed, but the part of Permian football he liked best—undersized underachievers becoming overachievers—was absent at Baylor. “You’re around great athletes,” he says. “Big kids who can run. At Permian you were around kids who just didn’t look the part. But they got it done.”

An exceptional academic opportunity came Mike’s way because of *Friday Night Lights*. An English professor at Austin College was so taken with him after reading the book that he said the school would give Mike a full scholarship. The college, in Sherman, Texas, is private, small and highly regarded. I didn’t understand why Mike didn’t take up the



BOOK EXCERPT

Adapted from *Friday Night Lights*, 25th Anniversary Edition: *A Town, a Team, and a Dream*, by H. G. Bissinger (Da Capo Press, a member of The Perseus Books Group). Copyright © 2015.



offer. It bothered me. I was younger then and easily disappointed. I now realize the judgments we make about others are usually wrong and based on what we want.

"I was 18, 19 years old," Mike says. "I was comfortable in my own element." When he visited Austin College, his overwhelming feeling was, he recalls, "I don't even know why I'm here." It didn't make sense to me then, but it does now. Mike was withdrawn and shy. He was too uncomfortable in his own skin to seamlessly share a college environment with others from a different socioeconomic realm. Instead he transferred to Tarleton State University, in Stephenville, Texas, and graduated with a bachelor's degree in marketing and a minor in accounting.

Decatur, population circa 6,000, is the perfect place for him. It offers proximity to his family; a sweet and easy nine-hole golf course in nearby Bridgeport; a good job with a good income; and the ability to play with his nieces and nephews and, as he puts it, "get 'em all riled up and then see you later." He still feels most comfortable in his own cocoon; he got a cellphone only because his sisters made him. He has regrets, like the rest of us. There was a significant other in his past.

I wonder if he wishes he had given Austin College more of a chance. When I ask him what he might have done differently, his response is vintage Winchellian: "If you invented a time machine, you'd be the richest man on the planet."

Touché.

"I don't want my son to go through what I went through. It was horrible."

FROM FORT WORTH I drive about 300 miles down to Beaumont. The next morning I head for a low-slung cream-colored building on the outskirts of town. It is part of a complex of virtually identical cream-colored buildings. Together they look like an office park—until you get closer and notice the spools of razor wire. Texas likes its places of incarceration tightly knit—prison theme parks.

I've arranged to meet Boobie Miles in the waiting room of the Mark W. Stiles Unit. There are 48 booths, each with a barrier of thick Plexiglas, visitor on one side, inmate on the other. They look like makeshift confessionals.

Forgive me, for I have sinned.

Say three Hail Marys and hope the f--- you make parole.

In the middle of the waiting room are round tables of pressed wood for so-called contact visits. There is a shelf containing books you can read while you wait. The offerings are meager: *What Happens When I Talk to God?*, the Bible, the children's book *Bubble, Bubble, Toads in Trouble*, a prison rules and regulations pamphlet from 2008. A poster on the wall advertises an online program called JPay, which makes it possible to send money or an email to prison inmates all over the country. The Internet leaves no stone unturned.

The room is painted white. There is a row of vending

BOOBIE MILES

He says he has learned in prison (below, with Bissinger) the lessons he should have learned after he was sidelined by injury (opposite, 35).



machines in the back, and a door opposite where I am seated. After several minutes the door opens. My heart ticks up because I haven't seen Boobie in the 2½ years he's been here. An inmate enters, followed by a guard. The inmate heads straight in my direction, ready to be interviewed. He seems remarkably eager, except for one discrepancy. He isn't Boobie Miles. The prison has sent the wrong inmate down. He looks disappointed when he is sent back. I feel a little guilty about not interviewing him.

It's a welcome distraction from my feelings of disappointment in Boobie, for the chances he squandered. I remember what he has been through in his life: the beatings he received from a relative; his early separation from his mother; the foster homes he was in until he was rescued by his uncle L.V. The system of sports in this country, which grinds you up and then spits you out if you get hurt or the coaches find someone better, was the final wound. Yes, Boobie had some opportunities in life. But his life also ended when he was 18—at least the version of his life, big-time football player, that he and everyone around him had promoted to the exclusion of anything else.

Boobie Miles comes through the door, and the last remnants of my disappointment fall off. I catch my breath. I wanted memories, and now I am getting them. I suddenly realize I don't want them, at least not ones like these, so painful because they are also so beautiful. I am seeing a tape of Boobie his junior year. I am seeing his speed and strength, a man among boys, but it is the way in which he runs, with such joyful abandon, that is killing me.

He ended up in the Mark W. Stiles Unit after violating probation on a conviction for aggravated assault. In a pique of anger, arguing with someone in a car (he said the man

LENGTH, A MAN AMONG BOYS, BUT IT IS THE WAY HE RUNS, WITH SUCH JOYFUL ABANDON, THAT IS KILLING ME.



else who benefited from it less. It's hard to accept the routine of working a job and raising a family when people are asking for your autograph at the mall. I also think the attention kept taking him back to that moment in the fading light at Jones Stadium in Lubbock when he blew out his knee in a meaningless preseason scrimmage. He needed to let go of it, not keep coming back to it and feeling as if he was owed something because he had been so terribly cheated.

When scenes for the film were being shot at Ratliff Stadium in Odessa, a crowd of local extras gave Boobie a standing ovation. He enjoyed the star turn. It was also a half-assed way for people to forgive themselves for the racism to which Boobie was subjected his senior year, after he could no longer play. The amount of money he received for film rights, \$1,000, was shameful. (I significantly supple-

mented that sum out of my own pocket after pleas to the producers went nowhere.) A rap song called "Boobie Miles," written and performed by Big K.R.I.T., had more than a million hits on YouTube. Boobie was never compensated for the use of his name. Meanwhile paternity suits were brought against him by women who thought he was now rich.

"It happened the way it happened," Boobie says. "Ain't anything we can do about it."

I have heard him say this before. But his voice always got quiet and low, as if he was still watching his own game film, still poised to take his place as one of the elite college running backs in the country. He's more matter-of-fact now. I take it as a good sign. But I've misread signs from Boobie so many times before, giving him large chunks of money in the hope that they would bring him stability and help him raise his kids; buying him a car; helping him find jobs; paying for trade school in heating, ventilation and air conditioning. The ensuing pattern was always the same: a period of equilibrium, then another phone call to tell me he was broke.

After he graduated from Permian, Boobie went to Ranger (Texas) College. Because of the knee injury he no longer had the speed that, along with his size, had made him so formidable. He got tackled from behind. He disappointed his coach and teammates. He flunked out. There was a brief and unhappy stint with a semipro team in Culpeper, Va. Boobie moved back to Midland-Odessa and held down a series of menial jobs: driving a forklift, doing warehouse inventory. In 1998, L.V. died. L.V. was not simply a father figure, he was the only person Boobie truly trusted. "I lost the person who loved me the most and I loved the most," he says.

was insulting his family), Boobie hit him in the side of the head with a beer bottle. Boobie had no prior felony record; what scrapes he had had with the law were related to driving without a license or failure to pay child support. He was given 10 years' probation. He made the mandatory regular visits to his probation officer for a while, but then he quit. When he was stopped in Dallas for making an illegal U-turn, an outstanding warrant for violation of probation came up. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2012. He's eligible for parole in 2017.

Boobie is in a white prison uniform. He carries a little square towel with which to wipe his face, since any exertion makes him sweat profusely. When he went into prison he weighed 420 pounds, more than twice his playing weight. He could barely walk without becoming exhausted. He is now down to 368. Yet his face is exactly the same as it was in high school. There is still the little-kid smile, its eternal sunshine. There is still the same deep laugh. It makes me smile. It makes me want to cry.

He says he needed to go to prison to put his head right. He has done that by accepting responsibility for the first time since I have known him. "I feel good about myself," he says. "I felt like if something like this didn't happen, I might be dead somewhere." But there is such sadness in the way he relentlessly expresses disappointment in himself for not being stronger, not working harder, not being a better man.

"I could never just pick up the pieces," he says. "Every time I thought I could get it together, it just fell apart. I just let it happen. I didn't try to stay strong. Whatever happens happens, is how I took it."

The book gave Boobie a measure of fame. Then the film version catapulted him into celebrity. I can't think of anyone

I became involved in Boobie's life at that point. I had seen what had happened to him at Permian and could not live with it. I talked to him regularly. I saw him at his best in the early 2000s, as a father to his twins, James and Jasmine. I also saw what happened when he lost them in a custody dispute with his former wife. They were his heart. "I didn't have to wake up and get them dressed for school," he says. "I didn't have to wake up to, 'Daddy, pour me some cereal.' I cherished all that. That's what kept me going."

But what Boobie needed most—constant reinforcement of his value and constant personal counseling to prevent frustration—was not something I could give. I also realized that giving him money wasn't good for him. It was too tempting, as he told me, to spend it on booze and cocaine and Ecstasy and strip clubs. Or give it to people he knew for business deals, who then fleeced him. Sometimes Boobie worked. Sometimes, desperate for cash and maybe even more desperate to feel important, he sold drugs in Houston and Dallas, armed with a .45. "It's a wonder I didn't catch a case on anything," he says. It's a wonder he didn't get killed.

The last time I saw Boobie before he went to prison was in March 2012. He was working in the oil fields and seemed more together than I had ever seen him. I was working on an e-book about him called *After Friday Night Lights*, and we split the proceeds. It should have given him greater security and peace of mind. It led only to more bingeing. When I got a text from his old teammate Brian Chavez that Boobie was in jail for violating probation and was looking for someone to pay for a lawyer, I knew who that someone was. I was crapped out. Nothing I had done had made a significant difference. I let Boobie know that now. I say, "I was really pissed at you."

"Don't be, man," he replies. "Like I say, it's all on me. You did everything in your power to help. I screwed that up. I'm sorry. I wished I could have been strong enough to sit down and talk with you, and maybe you could have helped. At that point in time, I was so wicked."

In prison Boobie keeps mostly to himself. He says he has seen some things that he never wants to see again. He doesn't volunteer more, and I don't want to know more. He has few visitors. One is Evelyn Witherspoon, with whom he has a child named Evan. She has remained loyal to Boobie; when she visits, she brings along his twins. If Boobie can stay with her when he gets out, keep his head down and get a job, then maybe. . .

I have no illusions. But when I look at him across the little round table, I know that of all the themes raised in the book, the tragedy of Boobie Miles is the most important, and the most enduring. Considering today's ever-increasing obsession

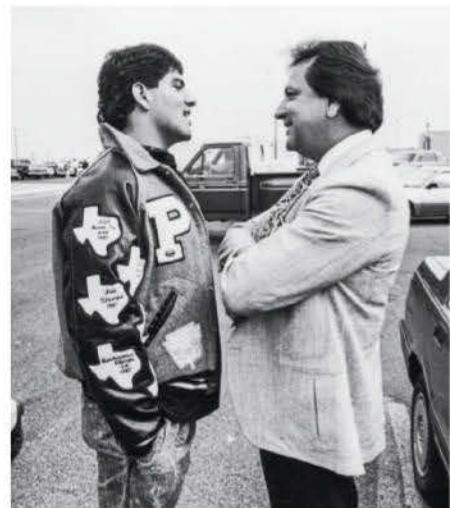
with sports, I wonder if anyone is really listening or even cares.

When Boobie was playing for Permian, he got 80s and 90s on his report card. The day before a test, he says, a tutor gave him the answers. "As long as I could play, I could get A's," he says. "When you got any kid at 15, 16, 17 years old, they're gonna accept that. I'm here to tell you, don't accept that. It's hard to, but don't accept it. Because look what happens: You get hurt and they don't care no more." Which is probably why Boobie had 50s and 60s on his report card after the injury. That was shocking enough, but it paled in comparison to Permian assistant coach Mike Belew's calling Boobie a "big dumb ole n-----" and some Permian boosters' laughing suggestion that



BRIAN CHAVEZ

The true student-athlete who starred on Friday nights (opposite) and went to Harvard came home to work with his dad (above and far right, with Brian).



like a horse gone lame, Boobie should be shot. The passing of 25 years cannot excuse those words.

One of Boobie's twins, James, goes to Irving (Texas) High. He will be a junior this fall and got picked for a Nike football camp. Boobie beams when he says that James is his spitting image on the field. Prison is not a good place from which to offer fatherly advice, but Boobie writes to his son and talks to him on the phone as much as he can to make sure he listens to the message that Boobie never heard. "If you don't have football, you have to have something," Boobie says. "I don't want him to turn out like I turned out. That's my worst fear. I don't want my son to go through what I went through. It was horrible."

Boobie's self-awareness is a wonderful thing. But watching someone find introspection in prison will break your heart.

It is time to leave. We've had more than an hour together, and the guard is getting restless. Boobie and I clasp hands. Then we embrace. There is a lot left to say. But maybe there is nothing except this.

"I love you, man."

"I love you, too."

THE NUBS OF HAIR. RICKETY DOUBLE-WIDE MOBILE HOMES LOOK AS IF THEY WERE SET DOWN BY THE WIND.



I watch him leave. I hover near the waiting-room entrance, looking through a window into an empty corridor. Everything is still. There is the flash of another memory. It is the one of Boobie at the 1988 Watermelon Feed, the big preseason picnic in the Permian cafeteria, walking through a narrow aisle to the cheering crowd with a beatific smile on his face. Young. Handsome. Strong. Immortal.

Mike Winchell was right. If only there was a time machine.

"Whatever Dez Bryant feels playing for the Cowboys, what Tony Romo feels playing for the Cowboys, we got to feel."

THE UNDULATIONS of the Hill Country give way to the parchment of West Texas. The final 60 miles to Odessa, more than 600 miles from Beaumont, are flat and scrubby, a balding scalp with little nubs of hair. Plastic bags and cups line a fence along the highway. Rickety double-wide mobile homes look as if they were set down by the wind and just left there. You wait for someone to emerge bleary-eyed with a beer in one hand and a shotgun in the other, looking for his favorite T-shirt underneath the Ford F-150.

This was never a place to be confused with natural beauty.

Downtown Odessa, at first glance, is exactly the same as I first saw it in the spring of 1988. The Scott Theater is still closed. So is the Ector. I make an immediate assumption that nothing has changed. But Odessa is different. The boom in oil prices that lasted until mid-2014 meant a boom in jobs and population and construction. In 1990 the city's population was about 90,000. In 2013 it was roughly 111,000. On the drive east from Odessa on Highway 191, toward the Ector County line, the proliferation of new housing makes the area look like a Dallas suburb. It's the same when you drive north toward Ratliff Stadium. New shopping centers have been built. So has a row of hotels to cash in on the boom, jacking up weekday prices for oil field workers. There is even a whiff of cosmopolitanism to the place, at least in several bars that cater to young professionals.

Still, Odessa is very much a roughneck town. Fists are a lot more interesting than words. According to a TIME.com article in 2014, Odessa has the most rapidly rising rate of violent

crime in the country, with a whopping 75.5% increase over the previous five years. The city is ranked as the most dangerous in Texas and the eighth most dangerous in the country.

High school football, which once so dominated the culture and landscape, now just blends in. The fortunes of the Permian football team have sunk miserably over the past 23 years. The Panthers have not won a state championship since 1991. Making it to the state finals, or at least the semifinals, was the expectation when I was there, but the team has made only one other finals since '91. Even making state, once automatic, is a wobbly proposition. Amid great hoopla, Gary Gaines, who coached the Panthers from 1986 through '89, was brought back to resurrect the program in 2009. He retired after the 2012 season with a record of 23–21, only one playoff appearance and no district championship. He now lives in Lubbock and works part time as a scoreboard salesman.

The team did make it to the third round of the Class 6A Division I playoffs last year, perhaps an indication of a turn-about. But attendance for the one home playoff game was shockingly low, the Permian side barely half full. I know that because Brian Chavez texted me a picture. We have stayed close over the years. So have our families. I don't know of any two people more giving than Brian's parents, Tony and Irma.

I am sitting across from Brian at his law office in downtown Odessa. He was an anomaly at Permian High, a blend of very good football player and superb student. My wife at the time had gone to Harvard. We both thought Brian would be a good candidate for the school. We encouraged him to apply. He was accepted, and he turned down other colleges that would have given him a full ride. I was honored to be invited to his graduation in Cambridge, although I confess that when Tony Chavez turned to me in Harvard Yard and said, with a little laugh, "I hope it was worth it," I wondered if I should have kept my mouth shut, just as I should have with Mike Winchell.

Going to Harvard from Odessa was the cultural equivalent of the Pluto mission. Brian went out for football as a freshman but quit after several practices. He was scared that he would not be able to juggle the game and academics. Perhaps he wasn't good enough. But because of his experience in Odessa,

THE EXPERIENCE OF HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER. YOU ARE

he had lost the appetite to play. “The way Permian football was and the way Harvard football was, it was night and day,” he says. “I didn’t feel the passion, didn’t feel the hunger.”

Brian *could* handle the academics at Harvard. But he never quite made the social transition, which is probably why he spent his junior year at the University of Texas. “I had those social barriers,” he says. “It was just a different world. I came from a public high school where football was king. The way my Harvard classmates grew up was totally different. They were geared to rule the world. They were geared to go to Harvard when they were in kindergarten. I’ve always had that inner struggle: Am I going to be the academic-rule-the-world politician or am I just going to be a regular guy and hang out?”

It did not help that a profile of Brian that appeared on the front page of *The Boston Globe*’s sports section after the book’s publication quoted him as saying that the Harvard football program was a shell of Permian’s. Players on the team did not take kindly to that, resulting in some fights and verbal altercations in which Brian more than held his own—proof that you can take the kid out of Odessa, but you can’t take Odessa out of the kid.

Brian returned to Harvard for his senior year and graduated in 1993, an accomplishment of which he is immensely proud. He says it was the hardest thing he has ever done. He went to law school at Texas Tech, then returned to Odessa to work in his family’s law firm as a criminal defense attorney. I always wondered why. He tells me that after Harvard, he needed to come home to be with family and friends in an environment that embraced him. He did well, built an easy and very comfortable life. Until something incomprehensible happened.

In 2009 he became involved in an altercation that careened terribly out of control. By his own account, it started as a domestic dispute involving his girlfriend (now his fiancée) and her ex-husband and escalated into a brawl in which he and two other men entered the house of a friend of the ex-husband’s and took on eight people inside. Brian was arrested on charges of burglary (illegal entry) of a habitation with intent to commit assault—a serious felony. Because of his exposure in my book and the film, his arrest was widely reported, appearing as far away as *The New Yorker*’s website. He pleaded guilty in July 2010 to one count of felony burglary of a habitation, according to the *Odessa American*. He was placed on five years of community supervision with deferred adjudication. The State Bar of Texas suspended his law license for five years. Reinstatement is scheduled for this December.

If any good came out of the incident, it was that Brian’s suspension caused him to diversify. Wanting a piece of the oil boom, he started a company called FNL Energy, with seven trucks hauling sand and water to oil fields. Since the recent precipitous drop in oil prices, however, he has branched out into the produce transport business. He also has several residential properties in Odessa that he rents out. And in

JERROD MCDUGAL

The young man who comforted a teammate after a heartbreaking loss (right) still wears his heart on his sleeve.



El Paso he and three partners own an Italian restaurant and a converted ballroom for private events.

But what Brian did in 2009 is still something I never would have expected. His father virtually broke down at his sentencing. I would have too, had I been there.

Brian is still part of the fabric of Odessa: You go out with him, and it’s unlikely you’ll see anyone he doesn’t know. He has relatives who go to Permian, and he believes that because of *Friday Night Lights*, the educational system is slightly better. But he still sees inequities in Odessa, particularly what he believes is very limited Latino representation in a city that is more than 50% Latino. “When you were here, [Odessa] was stuck in the 1940s,” he tells me. “Now, in the 2000s, it is probably stuck in the ’80s.”

He goes to the occasional Permian game, but the atmosphere isn’t the same as before. “People go on a Friday night like regular human beings,” he says. There was no World Wide Web in 1988. Cable TV was nascent. The off-season workouts, with the strategically placed garbage cans for vomiting, are no longer as hard as Marine boot camp, because of a fear that kids will simply quit. In other words football is, as Brian puts it, “what it should be.” But a part of him wishes for a return to the way football was.

I understand that because even I feel it. Those football games in 1988 were the best sporting events I have ever witnessed. Of course, when you have spectacles like that, there is no way to create a proper balance. Football takes up all the space and air. It needed to be diminished.

And yet. . . .

“I just remember walking down the tunnel,” Brian says. “You turn that corner, and man, it was like, Wow, you can’t get a high like that. Whatever Dez Bryant feels playing for the Cowboys,

YOUNG ENOUGH TO DREAM AND STILL NOT OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT MOST DREAMS NEVER COME TRUE.



what Tony Romo feels playing for the Cowboys, we got to feel. It wasn't on the same scale, but we had the same feeling."

I leave his office and head 40 miles down the road to Crane. I still feel a shiver from Brian's description. I can see it: the crowd, the cheers, the chaos. Sometimes I wonder if I just imagined it all.

"Tony Randall had a boy at what, 77?"

I MEET JERROLD MCDUGAL out at an equipment yard in Crane. It is one of several around the state owned by his family business, M&P, which specializes in dirt excavation and building roads and platforms in the oil fields. Jerrod has worked there for much of his post-Permian life and has pretty much taken over from his father. He lives on a sprawling ranch in Bandera, more than 270 miles to the southeast, near San Antonio, but for now he is living in Crane as he prepares for an equipment sale.

He is slightly reticent when he sees me. A triple-wide in Crane is about as secluded a place as you can be in the Lower 48. Jerrod is solitary these days, and maybe I am intruding. It takes about 30 seconds for us to feel as if we're back in his pickup in the Permian parking lot with Bon Jovi raising the roof. I still love Jerrod. I love how he combines passion and schoolboy respect, the way he peppers one sentence with f-bombs and the next with *yessirs*. He is still emotional when he gets going, still on the verge of exploding until he abruptly stops. But there is a tinge of sadness to him now, a feeling that, as he puts it, "I might have missed some of my potential. I think all of us, when we reach our 40s, go through some of that."

He has never married. He has experienced searing personal

tragedy: His younger brother, Jaxon, lost the use of his legs and much of the use of his arms in a car accident in 1999 and died in 2008. The first several years after the accident had been O.K. for Jaxon, or as O.K. as they could be. But the last years were rough. "Every year we had to fight pneumonia," says Jerrod, which meant hospital stays of up to six weeks. While Jerrod knew he would not get another 10 years with his brother, he hoped there might be another five. Instead Jaxon died of an aortic tear in the heart, leaving behind two children. "He was a larger-than-life character," Jerrod says. Jerrod is right. I knew Jaxon.

Then, in 2013, Jerrod was involved in an accident while driving home from work on I-10. Two off-duty police officers returning from a hunting trip stopped to help, and they were hit by a truck. One died, and the other had his leg amputated. It is not something Jerrod can forget. I felt horribly for him then. Beneath his brusqueness there had always been a tender sensitivity.

I also felt a certain debt, since my favorite moment from my year in West Texas involved Jerrod. He had invited me to go hunting for white-tailed deer. He probably thought I was too much of a damn Yankee to do it. Actually, he probably hoped I wouldn't do it, thinking that in a matter of minutes I would shoot myself in the foot. But off we went, along with his father and Jaxon. The land belonged to his family and was as exotic to me as the moon. Jerrod and I were on the flatbed of the pickup with rifles across our laps. The sun was going down, hues of red and purple rising out of the stubble and the rock. I am not sure that I have ever felt more alive and unshackled than I did that afternoon, as far away from the familiar as I could get, out there in the haunting unknown with a family of West Texans who had become my precious friends.

Now we drive south about 10 miles to a quarry that M&P owns. It is beautiful in the way West Texas is beautiful, the vast emptiness filled in by one's own thoughts. Voices and movements are softer out here, muted by the flap of the wind as it runs across the desert. You know you are someplace unlike any other on earth.

Jerrod says he likes himself much better than he did when he was at Permian. He is quieter, a loner who has given up drinking copious amounts of beer (except when he and Brian Chavez get together) for more soothing Merlots and Cabs. He feels blessed to have good parents and reliable friends. But there are missing pieces.

He was once engaged, but it ended. "I like to think that I would have been a good father," he says. "If I was to find the right person and marry, I would love to experience that. . . . Tony Randall had a boy at what, 77?"

He has also realized that the experience of Permian football will never be equaled for him. Not the pageantry of the games but the connection with his teammates. I think that is one reason *Friday Night Lights* has been so successful: Readers identify with these boys from Permian. Whether you play in



IVORY CHRISTIAN

Still built like the linebacker he was in high school (below) and college, the Odessa-based trucker is also still a bit of an enigma.



front of a crowd of 900 or 19,000, the experience of high school football is unlike any other. You are young enough to dream and still not old enough to know that most dreams never come true.

"It took me about 10 to 15 years of working in different groups, different places, different environments, to finally come to the conclusion that I'm not ever gonna have a group of coworkers and teammates like I had then," Jerrod says. He and I stand at the quarry with that wind whipping across it. We continue to stare out, each finding our own point of reference on the horizon. We do not say a word.

"I knew if you really wanted to find me, you would."

I RETURN TO Odessa later that day, a Saturday, and gear up for the most challenging part of the journey.

Where is Ivory Christian? I have not talked to him in close to 20 years. I'm pretty sure he still lives in Odessa and works as a trucker. He called me from the road once at four in the morning. I was too tired to answer. I let the phone ring and then listened to the message. I called Ivory the next day. I never heard back. There had been various sightings of him in Odessa. Brian had seen him. Other former teammates had seen him. He appeared, then disappeared.

I called him before the trip to say I was coming to Odessa. No answer. I called again. No answer. I called again. No answer. I Googled him. Nothing. I went through websites that specialize in finding people. Several addresses for Ivory popped up, but it was impossible to know if any were current. I go to the first one on the list. The house is vacant. I'm getting frustrated. I call him again. This time I beg. No answer. He always did play a little hard to get. In a final gasp I look up property records for Ector County online. I find an address that matches one on the websites.

I drive out on Sunday morning. There is a car in front of the garage. I call again. No answer. I leave a groveling note. It's getting pathetic. I still have no idea if I have the right house. I knock on the door of a neighbor. She says she knows of somebody named Ivy Christian who lives there. It's a good lead. It also puzzles me. I know the Christian family, and I never heard of anyone named Ivy.

I kill a few hours. I go back on Sunday afternoon. I knock on the door. A woman answers. I ask if an Ivory Christian lives there. She tells me to wait a moment. . . .

"I was taking a nap," he says. He is not exactly thrilled to see

me, but he isn't repelled. Actually, as he lets me twist, he seems amused. The ambivalence of Ivory.

He was the only senior on the 1988 Permian team to get a major college scholarship. He played middle linebacker at TCU, starting two games and getting playing time in seven others as a freshman. But after he sprained a knee, he dropped down on the depth chart his sophomore season. The knee got better, but his relationship with the position coach apparently did not. Ivory went down to third string. He was insulted. "I've never sat on the bench a day in my life," he said. So he quit the team and left school. He got an associate's degree at Odessa College. He worked at Midland International Airport doing maintenance, then serviced planes for the state's Aircraft Pooling Board in Austin.

He became a trucker, like his father, lucky if he was home three days a month. Now he delivers nitrogen to places such as Amarillo and El Paso. He is living the trucker's dream, working weekdays and home every night. I'm not surprised. Ivory always knew what he wanted and what he did not. Even if nobody else did.

In 2008 he married a woman he had known since he was 15. They have a six-year-old named Ivy (now I get it). I watch him wrap his arms around her. For a man who played with such ferocity on the football field, he always had a gentle soul.

He looks as if he could still play linebacker for TCU. He is stable and content. "I stay in my bubble, my little shell," he says.

I ask him why he never returned my phone calls. "I knew if you really wanted to find me, you would," he replies. The ambivalence of Ivory.

"So, are you happy to see me?"

He pauses. "I am happy to see you."

I don't stay very long. He was always a man of few words, and even fewer now. He seems disappointed. He says, "That's it?"

"That's it."

He wants to show me something before I leave. We turn a corner into the dining area. There, on the near wall, is an intricate collage in a large black frame. It was carefully constructed by Ivory himself. In the middle is the letter jacket he wore. There are 11 patches down the leather sleeves, commemorating Permian's playoff games when he was on the team. There is the number he wore, 62, with a football between the digits. There is a large *P* for Permian. At the bottom is the front cover of the hardback

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of the year



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a catch



MO
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edition of *Friday Night Lights*. In the adjoining panel is the page showing a picture of him.

I did not think the book mattered much to him. Which is why I smile as I head toward Dallas and my final destination.

"You did great, baby."

IT'S ODD at first to see Don Billingsley in his business-casual attire, looking as if he just walked off the pages of *GQ*. Crisp slacks. Collared shirt. Fine shoes with a slightly narrow toe. Not a hair out of place. Still close to his playing weight. What the. . .

In the book Don was a renegade, a sidewinder, a twinkle-in-the-eye bad boy. When everybody else mouthed the company line, I went to Don for the real deal. He gave it to me.

But Don was on the edge. It was hard not to think that wherever he wound up, it would not be good. He drank. He regarded life with devilish disdain. I could not imagine him turning his around. Which is one reason I now know that high school behavior is the worst predictor of future behavior.

After graduating from Permian, Don went to East Central University in Ada, Okla. He did not seem to change much—until a friend from Permian committed suicide. Then Don knew. "I just asked God to come into my life and forgive my sins and take charge, because I wasn't in control," he says. "It changed my life. It was the only thing that could have."

He graduated from East Central in 1993 and got his master's degree in human resources from the school in '95. For several years he worked for an insurance company in Oklahoma City that ran an employee assistance program. In April 1999 he married Melanie Fannin, who worked in the corporate office of Southwest Airlines in Dallas. He moved there to join her. Today he works for the California-based company Protiviti as a health-care consultant. His gift is for telling clients what they should do in such a personable style that they actually do it. He and Melanie live on a corner lot in the Dallas suburb of Hickory Creek, in a beautiful house with a winding staircase next to professional photos of their three kids.

I ask Don if he regrets the book, given his portrait as a rogue. He tells me he does not, because the epilogue showed him turning his life around. Melanie feels differently: She did not make it through *Friday Night Lights* because the Don she read about was not the person she knew.

Don seems quite serious now. He talks in a way that is still friendly but also careful. Every now and then I see that twinkle in his eye, particularly when he talks about the bond he has

DON BILLINGSLEY

The high school rebel (right) turned his life around and is now a health-care consultant and family man.



with his coworkers and about their penchant for impromptu wrestling while traveling together. Melanie tells me that Don sometimes comes home with bruises. It sounds a little like a health-care-consulting version of *Fight Club*.

Where the old Don shows up—the Don I found so alive—is in his 11-year-old daughter, Landry. She is the kind of spirit who, when you take her picture, gives an outrageous grin and the thumbs-up sign with both thumbs. She oozes confidence. Melanie is quick to tell me that Landry inherited Don's athleticism.

At about 7 p.m. we go to see Landry at practice at the Denton Gymnastics Academy. She tied for No. 1 in the state last year on the balance beam. She practices three hours a day after school, and Don has tried to instill in her the mental toughness he learned at Permian. Those off-season boot camps have had their residual reward. We watch as Landry practices on the beam in her purple leotard, then does a series of fearless vaults. Her joy and comfort can be felt across the gym. Don is a bit of a disciplinarian as a father, which is probably why his three children—Landry; her 13-year-old sister, Skylar; and 10-year-old brother, Riggs—have the best manners this side of the border. But he also shows a fatherly softness. "You did great, baby," Don whispers to Landry.

We have dinner afterward at a taco place in Denton. I order something called the Ridiculously Big Taco or the Very Serious Taco. I am not disappointed. I down every Ridiculously Big or Very Serious inch of it in record time. Sometimes I overeat because I am anxious. Sometimes I overeat because I know I am in exactly the place I was meant to be.

I will not make a trip like this again. The next major anniversary of *Friday Night Lights* is the 50th, and I assume I will be dead or deserving of it. I love Texas, but this is the last time I will spend a week driving through it. The old players and I talked of a reunion and of keeping in touch. No promise is more easily broken. Yet it doesn't matter. I have seen all that I wanted to see. I have found what I needed. I have found more.

Don and I walk out into the parking lot after dinner. We hug. I think I see his eyes glisten after we disengage. But your perception plays tricks when you are hoping for something. So probably the glistening eyes are just my own. □



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Make a Splash

→ BY STEVE RUSHIN

THE GRILL RUNS out of propane. The paperback page-turner runs out of pages. Summer runs out the way a centerfielder runs out of real estate—slowly at first, then all at once. Suddenly you’ve set foot in August, summer’s warning track, the last 10 feet before the padded wall of fall.

So the Tigers are running out of time, the Mets are running out of offense, parents are running out of patience. The beer cooler at the liquor store is already making its cruel transition from Summer Ale to Harvest Pumpkin, in the same way that NFL training camps arrive to steal baseball’s thunder.

But just because big league teams throw in the towel with the arrival of the trade deadline, you don’t have to. There’s still time to complete your summer bucket list, or rather your plastic-bucket-and-shovel list. If summer were a soccer game—and for much of this summer it was—we’re only in the 61st minute.

Much has already been scratched off my seasonal to-do list. Witness Something I’ve Never Seen Before? At Target Field, Twins centerfielder Aaron Hicks turned his back to the plate and raced a deep fly ball by the Orioles’ Chris Parmelee to the wall. Those of us in the crowd looked at Hicks, then up at the ball, then back to the sprinting Hicks with growing alarm. When the ball fell over his shoulder and into his glove, 23,000 people gasped, then applauded. Horror had pivoted to wonder, as if a passing pedestrian had just caught a baby fallen from a window.

Shoot Hoops in a High School Gym? Did that, with all the doors open on a tropically hot afternoon, the gym cooled by a single oscillating fan that barely stirred the ancient summer-gym miasma of pebble-grained leather, industrial floor polish and the concentrated B.O. of a dozen unlaundered pinnies. Someone ought to bottle this scent—Gymnasium, by Calvin Klein—and sell it as a potent means of time travel.

The best sports moment of the summer was not on my list, but spontaneous. At a bar in northern Minnesota, the bartender reluctantly agreed to put the Women’s World Cup final on a single TV—the most decrepit of his dozen flat screens. “This one,” he said of the best monitor, “is reserved for NASCAR.” But another patron came in and asked for the match, and then several others, until one by one the various

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If summer
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and following
@SteveRushin

TVs were tuned to women’s soccer, like a series of slot-machine windows slowly lighting up with the same icon, until it felt like a kind of jackpot was being won above and beyond the U.S. victory.

Attend a Concert in a Ballpark? Foo Fighters rattled the china at Fenway, Dave Grohl performing in centerfield with a bearded, goofball intensity I hadn’t seen there since the days of Johnny Damon. The band’s cover of Alice Cooper’s “School’s Out” was a reminder that soon school will be back in, and we should seize the shortening days with Phineas and Ferb–like fervor.

So I’ve managed to Buy a Hammock but not yet Eat Nachos From a Batting Helmet. I finally did Oblige a Crowd of Children Chanting *Can-non-ball!* (Making a large splash in a pool is the rare athletic skill that actually improves in middle age, and is undiminished even by death.) But I have not yet fulfilled my promise to Buy Ice Cream From an Ice Cream Truck. (If not, I can’t look my children in the eye again, or meet the cold, black, gumball gaze of SpongeBob Square Pants on a stick.)

I did Take My Very Tall Daughters to the WNBA All-Star Game, where they were duly inspired, and to which they now aspire—both words from the Latin root *inspirare*, “to breathe into,” something I did all summer long, breathing life into beach balls, pool toys and bubble wands.

The last item on the list, and annually the last to be completed, is Watch a Drive-in Movie from the Hood of a Minivan, a feat usually accomplished just under the wire, at the end of August, at the end of America, near the tip of Cape Cod. Weeks later, when the leaves are turning, I’ll deploy the windshield wipers and watch them toss up from their hiding place a few yellow pieces of drive-in popcorn. And somewhere, stuck in traffic, it will be summer again, a few minutes of stoppage time tacked on in September. □



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